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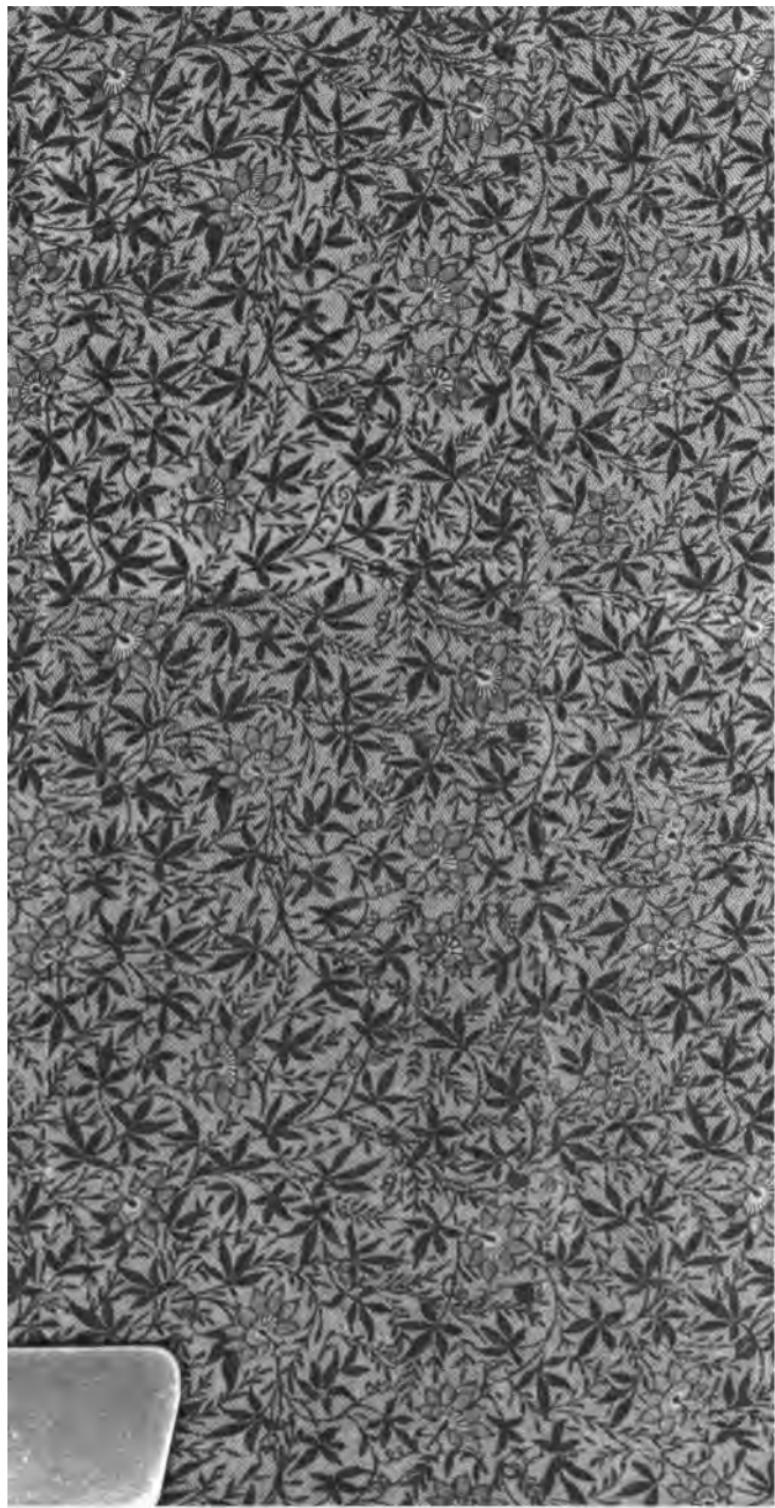
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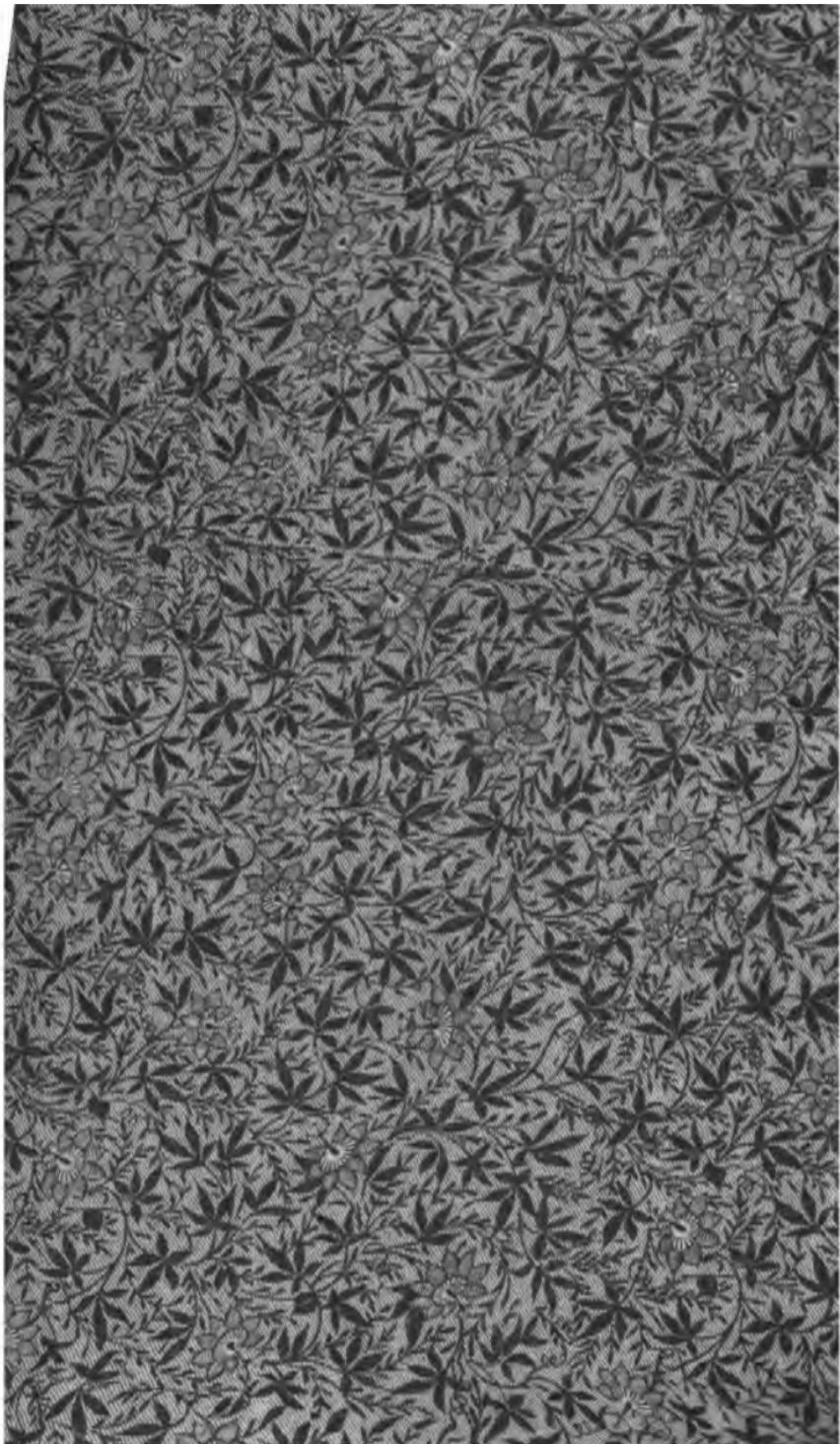
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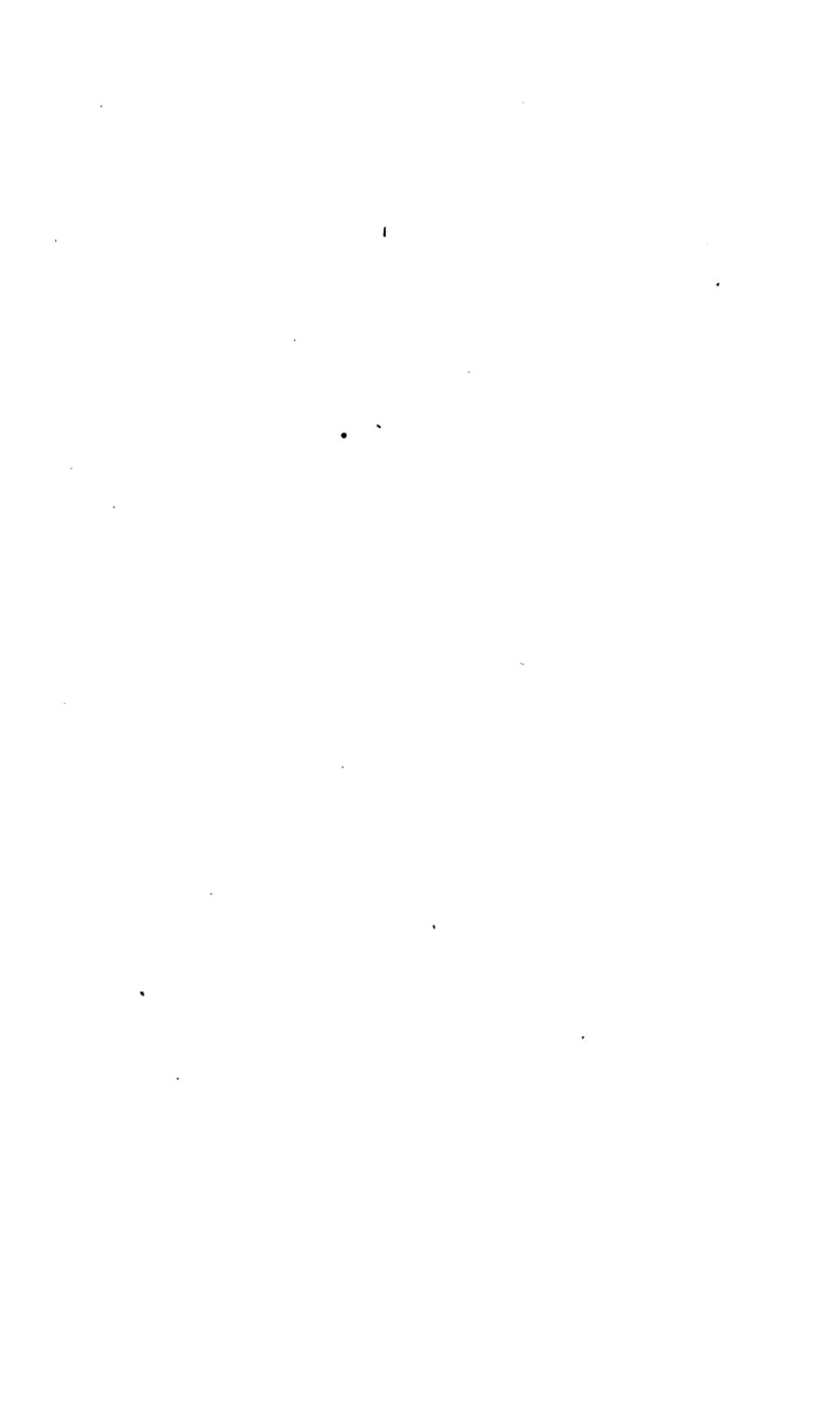


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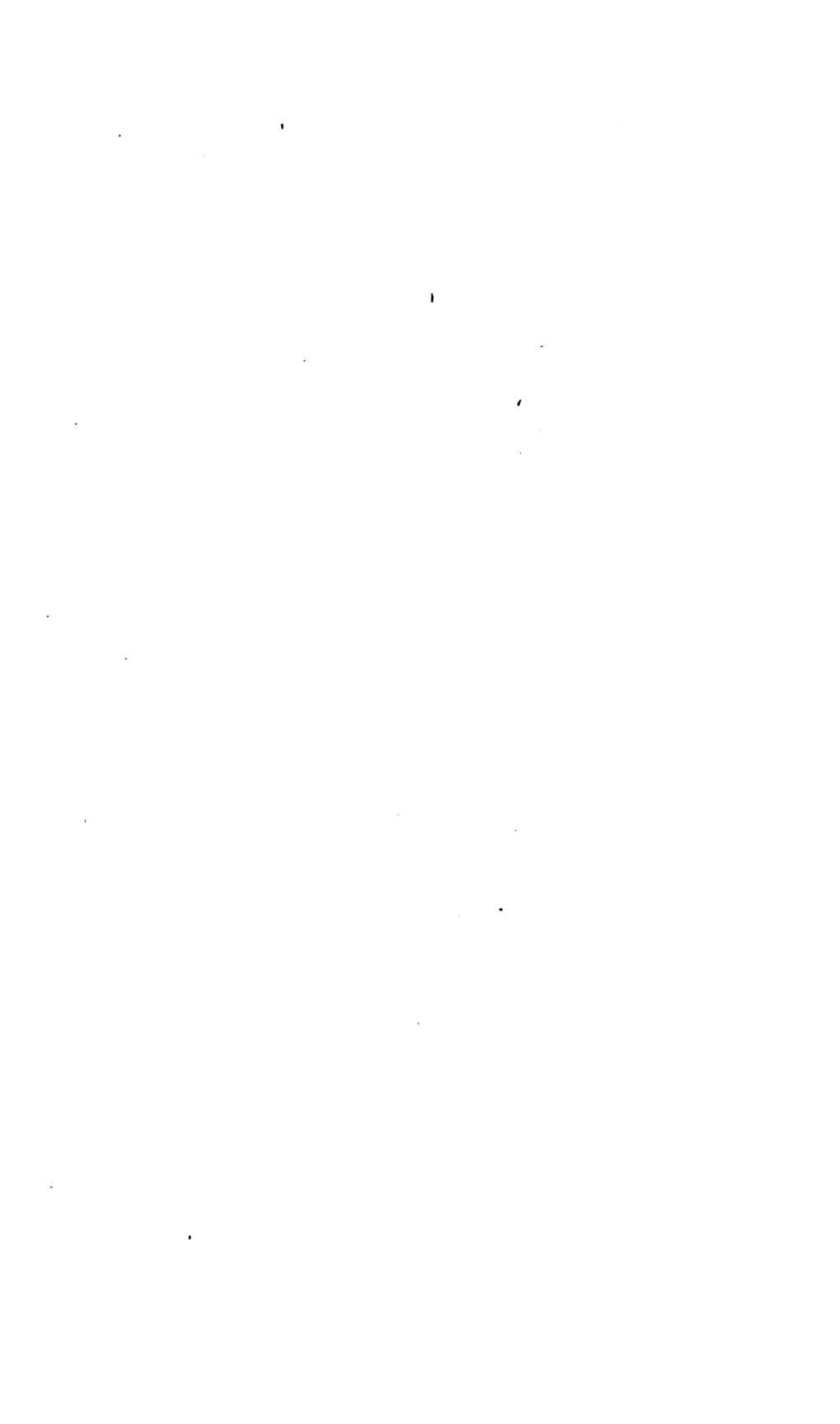
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**IN
LOVING AND TENDER MEMORY
OF
MY DEAR PARENTS
AND
MY BROTHER ALBERT.**

BOOK THE FIRST.

ROSES.



SHE WORE A WREATH OF ROSES.

CHAPTER I.

She wore a wreath of roses
The night that first we met.

IT was a wet muggy night !

Such a night as the inhabitants of “dear, dirty Dublin” are well accustomed to, and at which they do not wonder, nor do they murmur, for they know it is only what may be expected.

It had been raining all day ; it did not come in a steady downpour, which might cheer a hopeful heart with the thought that the rain might not last, and that the supply of moisture in the clouds should become exhausted. No ! it had been raining all day a steady, gentle drizzle, which never increased, never decreased, but seemed as if it would go on for ever. The streets were a morass of soft, sloughy, sticky mud that well nigh made them impassable ; and one would

think that few would care to venture out from their comfortable fireside, but, notwithstanding the drizzle and the mud, there were many pedestrians, and carriages and cabs innumerable were bowling along, all in the same direction.

It was the last Wednesday in January, and it was the opening of the Castle season, for it was the night of the first drawing-room, and all the wealth, youth, and beauty of Dublin were being borne along Aston's Quay, Parliament Street, into the Castle yard, and deposited at its portals.

Along the pathway a crowd of good-humoured pedestrians were standing sheltered by umbrellas; they braved the drizzle and the mud to look at the quality, and many and loud were the remarks made at the points of vantage, where a good view was obtainable. Near every gas lamp there was a considerable group, and as each carriage passed the occupants had to submit to hearing very many home truths.

"Oh! jiminy!" cried one urchin, "look at that ould hag! She ought to be in her bed."

"Faith! it's making her sowl she ought to be," was the rejoinder.

At the next lamp the same lady was again saluted.

"Ah! git home out of that, you ould witch! what d'ye want with galivanting about at night?"

"Bedad! she's going to get a good tuck in," said another voice; "she looks as if she hadn't eaten a bit fur a month."

"True for you! she puts her money on her back," was the response.

Many similar remarks were made, and they afforded considerable amusement to the occupants of the next vehicle in the line; it was a cab, and contained two young men in uniform, who were allowed to pass without remark, as the by-standers were only interested in the ladies.

A carriage followed the cab, and the officers soon learned that one of the occupants met with universal approval, for no sooner was an observation made about the "ould hag" or the "ould witch" in the carriage ahead, than it was quickly followed by some remark such as "There's a beauty for you."

"Oh! isn't she a darlint? I'd like her for a sweetheart."

"Whisht! is it a blissed saint from heaven

you want for a sweetheart?" was the rebuke administered to the audacious and amorous youth.

The line of vehicles moved on, but at the next lamp there was a long pause, and the two young men in the cab listened to the conversation of the by-standers.

The lady in the carriage in front, must have felt very uncomfortable, for certainly no compliments were paid to her.

A woman in the crowd caught sight of a face that pleased her, it was in the carriage behind the cab.

"Never mind the ould catamaran," she said, "look, there's a darlint! God bless your purty face, miss, may you never be sick nor sorry; for 'tis good for sore eyes to see the likes of you!"

The line of vehicles was again in motion.

"I say Harold," said one of the young men in the cab, as he flung the end of his cigar out of the window, "one of your Dublin beauties must be just behind us."

"Yes! I daresay. I wonder who can it be!"

"I suppose you know her if she is a belle?" queried the first speaker.

"Most probably! but at all events you'll meet lots of pretty girls."

"So you've told me, Harold, and that tempted me to come to Dublin. I can tell you if I could have turned back half-way between Holyhead and Kingstown, I would have done so."

"It was a bore you had such a rough passage," remarked his companion. There was a pause, then said the first speaker—

"I say Harold, I have got a presentiment that I am going to meet my fate to-night!"

"For heaven's sake, Percy, don't talk rubbish!"

"It isn't rubbish!"

"Percy!" in a severe tone, "if I thought you were likely to fall in love with a girl here, I'd turn back to barracks this moment. What would your governor say to an Irish beauty, without sixpence for her fortune?"

"He wouldn't like her," with a grin.

"Well then! don't get me into a hobble."

"I'm not quite as inflammable as you suppose," replied Percy, "but I already feel deeply interested in the beauty behind us, but don't be afraid, Harold, there is no danger of my making a fool of myself."

"Here we are at last!" said Harold, "let

us stalk the ould witch, and wait in the cloak-room for the beauty."

The two young men alighted, and passed in. Harold Detmar was tall and well built, his complexion was fair, he had laughing blue eyes, light brown curly hair, and a long drooping moustache. He wore the uniform of a line regiment, then stationed in Dublin. His companion, Percy Langrishe, was his first cousin, they were both so much alike that at school and college, they were always taken for brothers. Harold Detmar was a little taller than his cousin, and Percy's hair was just a shade lighter ; but the likeness between them was remarkable. Lady Langrishe and Mrs. Detmar were twin sisters, and their sons had always been fast and firm friends. Captain Detmar had just got his company before the regiment arrived in Dublin, and since he had been there, he had made many acquaintances ; and altogether, was having such a good time, that he invited his cousin to come over.

Percy Langrishe was the only son of Sir Charles, the eighth baronet, who from ill-health was a most irascible old gentleman. Lady Langrishe had become so accustomed to her husband's temper, that he might rave and

fume without her taking the least notice ; but since Percy was grown up, he spent very little of his time at Fernleigh ; and it was well known that Sir Charles and his son and heir did not get on together. Percy Langrishe, wore the uniform of the West York Rifles.

The two followed the “ould witch” into the cloak-room ; and indeed, it was no wonder that she did not meet with the approval of the populace ; she was old, yellow, and shrivelled ; but as she takes no part in our story, it is useless to say more. The two young men stood facing the door ; so that they had a good view of the next arrivals. First came a fair dame of some forty years or thereabouts ; she walked with a stately carriage, and head thrown back. Behind her came a young man, who looked about two-and-twenty or less ; one glance would tell that he was her son ; he had the same features, the same fair hair, and the same erect carriage ; he wore a Militia uniform.

Then came a young girl—

She wore a wreath of roses,
The night that first we met,
Her lovely face was smiling,
Beneath her curls of jet.

She was lovely ! There could be no second

opinion on the subject, features, complexion, figure, all perfect. Her skin was exquisitely fair, and her colour like the tinge of a most delicate rose. She had very large dark blue or rather violet eyes, which had a sleepy, dreamy expression, her hair was black, it was silky and wavy, and was dressed in little puffs and rolls, with a few tiny curls straying over her white forehead. She wore the white dress and train of a *débutante*, it was of rich material, but was simply made, and fitted her to perfection. She wore a wreath of tiny roses, from which was fastened the long tulle veil and white feather; and her train was ornamented with bunches of roses.

“It’s a pity, me darlint; but shure we’re too late to see the ould witch,” said the youth, with an inimitable brogue.

“Oh! Gerry, hush!”

“I’m sorry! I should like to have seen her, but it is all mother’s fault, she was so long about getting out. I say!” in a whisper, “isn’t mother’s neck very fat? she looks like a prize pig!”

“Do be quiet, Gerry! you are really quite incorrigible. Have you any remark to make about me?”

“Not a syllable, me darlint!” and he

laughed a gay boyish laugh, as he handed his sister her bouquet.

“ We may as well move on, dear,” said the fair matron, who sailed away, followed by her handsome son, and lovely daughter, who walked with a graceful easy carriage.

Her footstep had the lightness,
Her voice the joyous tone,
The tokens of a youthful heart,
Where sorrow is unknown.

“ Who is she, Harold ? ” whispered Percy to his cousin.

“ Don’t know ! never saw her before, but I’ll soon find out.”

“ She’s lovely ! ”

“ What ! smitten already ! Look here ! ” in a severe tone, “ I consider it my duty to prevent your making a fool of yourself, therefore I intend to go in for that young lady.”

“ You’ll have to get introduced first,” remarked his cousin.

They followed the trio up the wide staircase, and then on, into the narrow passage leading to the drawing-room. The beauty and her companions were provided with cards, so had not to make any delay.

“ Percy, go and write two cards for each

of us, at that table," said Harold, "and I'll find out her name."

He kept close behind, and when the party reached the door, they handed their cards to the man waiting to receive them, and passed on.

"I say!" said Captain Detmar, "let me look at that presentation card please."

The man handed it to him with a smile, he read—

"Miss O'MAHON,
"Wild Park,
"Co. Roscommon,
"100, St. Stephen's Green."

"Many thanks!" he said as he gave it back, and turned to meet his cousin, who soon joined him with the requisite cards.

"I know her name," said Harold, and he told it, "and now I must look out for an introduction. You may call me a blockhead, if I don't get introduced to-night."

They reached the door, handed their cards, and passed in.

"Good heavens! the Fowlers!" ejaculated Harold, in an aside to his cousin, "*sauvez-vous!*"

"How d'ye do, Captain Detmar?" said

Mrs. Fowler, "so glad to have met you, I think we may as well move on girls."

The girls acquiesced, and one got at either side of Harold, who devoutly wished them all at Jericho.

Mrs. Fowler and her two daughters had been patiently awaiting the arrival of a man, any man, it did not matter if he were young or old, tall or short, fat or lean, they wanted a man. They had been sitting just inside the door watching for one. Several of their acquaintances had passed, but as they were escorting ladies they escaped. Not so poor Harold Detmar, however, he hoped by-and-by to make his cousin an excuse for leaving them.

Mrs. Fowler was a large, massive woman with a large face, and a mouth to correspond. Ella Fowler was tall, and probably in time would develop into size and weight like her mother; Ida was shorter and slighter. They were both painfully ugly girls, they had muddy drab complexions, hideous mouths, and frightful teeth, their only redeeming point was their eyes, they both had good eyes, and knew how to make use of them.

Plain-looking girls, as a rule are generally retiring, but the Fowler sisters were any-

thing but that, they sang at amateur concerts, loved to get a part in theatricals, and had such a wonderfully good opinion of themselves that they never for an instant saw that they were not popular. People were afraid of them. Ella had a sharp tongue, and Ida was a mimic.

They ran after, and made up to men, military especially, and generally succeeded in getting plenty of dancing, but then their partners were all detrimentals, young barristers without a brief, young doctors without a patient, the boys of the barracks and juniors of all kinds. Their style of dress was always *voyant*, if red were fashionable, they wore a redder red, and more of it, than any one else, their dresses were more tied back, scantier, or shorter, than the mode of the day, they were always an exaggeration of the fancy of the hour. Captain Detmar had met them at a picnic the previous summer, and from that time they fastened on him when an opportunity offered.

"Why didn't you introduce your friend?" asked Ida, in a plaintive voice.

"Percy says he doesn't want to know anybody here except a young lady who came in before us. Do you see her just beside the

console? she wears a wreath of roses, do you know her?"

Ida took up her *pince-nez*, and looked across the room in a critical kind of way. She could see quite well without a glass, but she thought the use of it effective occasionally.

"H'm! she's not bad-looking, but I don't know who she is; never saw her before, so she can't be anybody particular. What do you think of her, Ella?" she said, turning to her sister, who followed Ida's example, and took a *pince-nez* view of the young lady, and then said, with a sneer—

"Not bad-looking, but very dolly! Don't you think she's very dolly, Captain Detmar?"

"I think she is lovely!" was the reply, in an impatient tone. But the next moment he wished he had bitten his tongue before speaking, for he saw from the expression of the sisters' faces that they did not like the beauty of others extolled in their hearing, and he knew they could use their tongues and say very spiteful things.

In a few minutes Ella said, having again looked at the fair girl—

"I really think I am right in saying she is

dolly ; and now I perceive she is very much made up."

Harold Detmar, longed for escape, but saw no chance of it. However, he was determined to give them the slip when they got to the presentation room, for he wanted to join his cousin.

Fortunately a young ensign came near, and he introduced him at once to the girls and their mother. He hoped devoutly that another raw youth might appear soon, and give him an opportunity of following the fair wearer of the wreath of roses.

"Are you going to Mrs. Scott's ball next Friday ?" asked Ella of Captain Detmar.

"No ! I don't know the lady. Never heard of her before."

"She's Dr. Scott's wife. They live in Merrion Square. It will be a good ball. I'll get you an invitation."

"Thanks ! but I couldn't leave my cousin."

"Oh ! I'll get him an invitation, too, quite easily. How do you do, Mrs. Scott ?" said Ella, as she turned back towards a good-humoured-looking little woman who was some yards behind. "Allow me to introduce Captain Detmar, and I want you to let us take him and his cousin with us on Friday night."

Harold was completely taken aback. There was nothing that he disliked so much as invitation hunting on his account.

Mrs. Scott smiled, and said—

“ You may bring your friends certainly, Miss Fowler. It will give me great pleasure to see them.”

“ Well, then,” said Ella, “ that’s settled. You and your cousin can call for us.”

“ Thanks, very much ! ” said Harold, “ but I regret I cannot accept your kind invitation. You must excuse me, Mrs. Scott, but I dine with Dr. Smallman, and I don’t know but there may be something in the evening, for Mrs. Smallman told me not to accept any other invitation. My cousin is coming there also.”

Mrs. Scott guessed that Harold did not want to call for the Fowler family. She knew their tactics.

“ Oh ! Then if you are dining with the Smallmans you are coming to me later. Everybody there will come, so I’ll expect to see you.”

“ Thanks ! ” replied Harold, who did not object to go to the dance if he could go without *beauing* the Fowler family.

Ella looked awfully disappointed. She

liked the *éclat* of having a handsome, military man in attendance on her. However, as she found she could not succeed in her designs, as far as Captain Detmar was concerned, she thought she would avail herself of Mrs. Scott's good-nature, and manage to secure two other beaux. So in the most off-hand manner she turned round to the young sub. talking to her sister, and asked him to come with them to the ball. Of course he was delighted, and promised to call for them, and a few minutes later they were joined by a jovial militiaman, who was also quite willing to accompany them to Mrs. Scott's ball.

Harold Detmar at last saw a chance of escape, so, when the barrier across the entrance to the ante-room was raised, he managed, in the struggle, to get separated from the Fowler family, and hurried after his cousin, who was a good way ahead. The sisters did not mind his deserting them, as they had each secured a man, and as soon as they reached St. Patrick's Hall their mother would take up her position among the wall-flowers and leave them to their own devices.

Harold joined his cousin, who was keeping close up to the beauty.

It was very evident that she attracted universal admiration, for every one was looking at her, and whispers were heard.

“Who is she?” went from one to another.

“Don’t know! She’s lovely! She’s the belle, to-night!”

Mrs. O’Mahon passed into the throne room, her daughter, who was duly presented, came after, and all eyes followed her as she went into the next room, where Mrs. O’Mahon was soon joined by an elderly man in the dress of a deputy-lieutenant. Mrs. O’Mahon presented him to her daughter; but from the stiff manner of the young lady, it was evident she knew something to the disadvantage of the gentleman. Her brother too, seemed not too well pleased, and gave him a very cool nod.

“Where has your mother been keeping you all these years? How is it I have never seen you before?” asked Mr. Martin.

“My sister and I have been at school; we were first in Germany and afterwards in France, and we only came home just before Christmas. I ought to have come away sooner, but I could not bear to leave Maud alone.”

“Is your sister here to-night?”

"No; she is at home with papa," was the reply.

"Will you allow me to get you some refreshment?" and he offered his arm to Miss O'Mahon, who went away with him.

Mr. Stephen Martin was nearly fifty years of age. He was a tall, large man, his complexion was dark, he had grizzled hair, he wore no whiskers, but had a moustache and a rather too luxuriant imperial; he had small, dark grey eyes, which had a cunning expression, and at a glance one could see that Mr. Martin was a very self-willed and determined man. He was a deputy-lieutenant, had a handsome property, besides being the owner of very considerable wealth. He had been a widower for some years, and had been angled for by maids and widows innumerable, but he was not to be caught. He had one only child, a girl, who was at school in England.

Mr. Martin certainly had a very stern and harsh manner, and was known to be most unyielding, but when he so willed it he could make himself most agreeable. In a short time he made a favourable impression on Eily O'Mahon, who found him a very entertaining companion, although when her mother

mentioned his name she felt she would dislike him.

The name of Stephen Martin was not popular at Wild Park, for he was the holder of the mortgage of the family property, and any day might turn the O'Mahons out of their home.

He chatted gaily to Eily, and pointed out the various notabilities; all was new to her, so she enjoyed hearing who was who. In a little while she returned to her mother, who had secured a seat.

Mr. Martin remained talking to them, and they were soon joined by Dr. Scott, who had often prescribed for Mrs. O'Mahon's ailments, imaginary or otherwise.

Mr. Martin whispered a word or two to the fashionable doctor, and then introduced him to Miss O'Mahon.

"I am very pleased to meet you," he said. "No danger of your mother having to bring you to see me."

"Oh, indeed I hope not doctor," said Mrs. O'Mahon. "I am happy to say my children are quite healthy."

"So much the better. But all the same I want you to bring Miss O'Mahon to see me,

only it won't be a professional visit, for I want you to pay it at night. My wife is giving a dance next Friday, and I hope we may have the pleasure of your company. I'll go look for Mrs. Scott to come and ask you herself, but in case I cannot find her, give me your address, and she'll call and leave cards to-morrow."

"Oh, thank you very much, you are very kind. We accept with pleasure."

The doctor found his wife, who came and repeated the invitation.

Eily was very pleased, and looked up gratefully at Mr. Martin, to whom she knew she was indebted for the invitation, for she heard the purport of his whisper to the doctor.

"You are very good to get us invited," she said. "I cannot tell you how much I long to go to a ball. It will be my very first."

"Then you'll be sure to enjoy it."

"I hope so. Indeed, I feel sure I shall like it very much, although Gerry says they are a delusion; but then he couldn't dance; but lately he has been practising with Maud and me, and now he can."

"As it will be your first ball, I hope you

won't think an old fellow like me presuming if I ask you to give me a quadrille or two. Will you say the first and one later?"

"With pleasure," she answered.

Soon there was a general move, the presentations were over, the vice-regal procession passed through the rooms, and then the company began to depart.

Mr. Martin remained in attendance on Mrs. O'Mahon and her daughter to the last, and saw them to their carriage.

Harold Detmar and his cousin had lingered near Miss O'Mahon and her party for a considerable time, hoping that some acquaintance might know her, and introduce them, but they saw no chance, so at last went away and devoted themselves to other girls.

If Harold had remained long enough he would have seen Mrs. Scott, and then he might have guessed that there would be a chance of meeting the beauty at her house, but before she came he and his cousin had joined Mrs. McWhizzey and her pretty daughters. They walked about with the girls, and finally saw them to the cloak-room.

Harold and Percy returned to St. Patrick's Hall, and went to the buffet, where they

found the Misses Fowler, attended by the youthful sub. and the jovial militiaman.

"Have you come to refresh the inner man, Captain Detmar?" asked Ida. "What's your tap?"

"There isn't much choice," remarked her sister, "nothing but sherry and seltzer and claret. I despise both; I only care for fizz!"

"The claret is good, I know," said Harold. "Will you have some, Percy?"

"Thanks, yes."

"Oh! I say! introduce your cousin, and I'll tell him all about the girl with the roses. I have heard all about her," said Ella.

Of course there was nothing for Harold but to comply with the young lady's request, so the form of introduction was gone through.

"Captain Detmar told me you are quite smitten with the girl with the roses," she said, "so I'll tell you all about her. She is Miss O'Mahon, of Wild Park, Roscommon. I wonder very much at seeing her here, for they're awfully poor; I don't know where they got the money to pay for the dresses, that is if they are paid for, which is doubtful. There is a large property, but it is mort-

gaged to the very last farthing ; and the big man, who was with them to-night, Mr. Martin, is the mortgagee or mortgager— which is the word, Ida ? ”

“ Mortgagee.”

“ Mr. Martin is the mortgagee,” continued Ella, “ and he could turn them out any day. Miss O’Mahon ought to go in for captivating him, it wouldn’t be a bad game, but ‘old birds are not to be caught with chaff,’ and I’d bet a million kisses she doesn’t catch him.”

Percy felt disgusted at the idea of Miss Fowler’s million kisses, and almost longed to say so, but he merely replied—

“ It is hardly likely Miss O’Mahon would try to captivate a man old enough to be her father.”

“ Oh ! beggars can’t be choosers,” she replied, with a laugh ; “ if Stephen Martin throws the handkerchief, it will be caught eagerly. You’ll have no chance against him, Mr. Langrishe. I suppose we’ll meet at Mrs. Scott’s on Friday night. I’m engaged for a lot of dances already. We’re going now, so good-night.”

“ Good-night, Miss Fowler ! ”

She had thrown out her fly in vain. Percy

saw it, but didn't bite. He was not to be seduced into an engagement for a dance in that way, besides, he had taken a dislike to Ella Fowler, he considered her such very bad style.

"Where on earth were the Fowler girls raised, Harold?" asked his cousin.

"On the Continent, I believe! They call themselves cosmopolitans!"

"Are they supposed to be ladies? The younger is just like a vulgar barmaid! I heard her ask you 'What's your tap?' Faugh!"

"Oh! you mustn't mind them, that's their way," said Harold.

"Well then, if that's the way of Irish girls I shan't care to meet many. The other little girl you introduced me to was nice and quiet."

"The Fowlers are not Irish! You mustn't take them as specimens of Dublin girls. Their mother is Scotch, their father was a London merchant, and left them tolerably well off. Mrs. Fowler went on the Continent for the education of the girls, and wandered about from place to place, living at hotels, and that is why the girls are so forward. A couple of years ago they came

to Dublin to see some friends, they liked the society, and here they are still. Report says Mrs. Fowler is a great gambler. I have heard of card parties, but I was never invited. But come along, Percy, we may as well go!"

So the cousins took their departure, and just as they reached the door Percy said—

"You're a blockhead, Harold!"

"What do you mean?"

"You said I might call you a blockhead if you were not introduced to the beauty to-night!"

"Oh! I forgot!" answered Harold.
"Give me a week, I'll manage it somehow."

"And so shall I!" said Percy quietly.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning Harold and Percy went to the rink, which was then the favourite resort of the fashionable world of Dublin. It had only been opened a short time, and rinking was all the rage, so Earlsfort Terrace was the daily rendezvous of the *beau-monde*.

When the cousins arrived only a few people had assembled, mostly beginners, who were making violent efforts to master the art of roller skating, and many and sore were the tumbles they got. Harold was an expert skater, having learnt in Canada ; but his cousin had little opportunity of practising, and found roller skating more difficult than he expected ; it was as much as he could do to keep on his feet, and although he had gone several times to Earlsfort Terrace, he was still quite a novice, and could barely keep his equilibrium.

In a little while the Fowler sisters arrived. Somehow Percy expected to see them in difficulties, and was rather astonished to find that they were accomplished skaters, for they went through several very difficult figures,

then the sisters, hand in hand, glided up to him.

"Good-morning, Mr. Langrishe," said Ella, "you seem to want instruction. Ida and I will help you. Give me your hand."

"Thanks, Miss Fowler, but I'm afraid! I'm sure I'd drag you down, for I tried with my cousin a few mornings ago, and we both came to grief; but it was all my fault."

"Oh! never mind! Don't be afraid! If you are persistent about falling and want to try if the asphalte is soft or otherwise we'll let you go. Depend upon it we shan't fall."

"Yes, come now," said Ida, "we want to have a pupil, and fancy you will do us credit. No one here can skate as well as we can, so trust yourself to our care, and don't be afraid. We'll go very quietly—you only want help to begin with."

Percy, so persuaded, gave a hand to each, and started off in fear, for he felt sure he should fall and drag them down before they should traverse many yards; but much to his relief he went quite round the rink without falling. Once or twice he stumbled, and was surprised to find how a very little help from the sisters kept him on his feet, and he felt grateful to them for their assistance, and

when parting he begged they would soon give him another lesson.

"Come to-morrow, if you like. We'll soon coach you," said Ella.

Next morning the Fowler sisters were early at the rink, and were soon joined by Percy, who started off between them with confidence, and consequently, after a few turns, he got on so well that Ida proposed he should try with her only. Ella turned to his cousin.

"Will you take a round with me, Captain Detmar?" said she. "Ida is taking possession of our pupil."

The two couples, after rinking some time, sat down to rest just as Mrs. O'Mahon and Mr. Martin arrived, who were soon followed by Gerry and his sister. Eily O'Mahon sat down next to Ella Fowler while the attendant adjusted the skates.

"Gerry, I'm awfully afraid," she said.

"Don't be a goose," he replied.

"I'm sure I'll fall."

"Well, that's your look-out. Wait for me. I'll take a turn or two and then come for you," and off Gerry skated.

"We'll see some tosses presently," whispered Ella to Captain Detmar.

Gerald O'Mahon started off with all the ease of an expert skater, in the meantime his sister stood up, and was very near going to the ground, but that Mr. Martin gave her a helping hand, and with his aid she ventured along slowly.

"I think I'll do now," she said, as her brother joined her, "let us try hand-in-hand," and the brother and sister went rapidly along.

The Fowler girls looked on with frowning brows, and their disappointment was intense, when they found that Eily and her brother were first-rate skaters, for soon they tried some of the figures that Ella and Ida were so fond of going through.

"They must have learnt in Germany, Ella!" said Ida.

"Yes! I fancy so. Come let us try *dos à dos*, I don't suppose they can do that."

But Ella had hardly spoken, when she saw the brother and sister flying along *dos à dos*, and a scowl passed over her face.

"Come along Mr. Langrishe," she said, in a sharp tone, "you may as well have another turn before we go, and we must be off soon."

The two sisters were awfully put out at

the appearance of Eily on the rink, for they knew that up to then, they alone were accomplished mistresses of the art, and had never dreamt that a girl from the bogs, as they called her, should rival them in skating ; and they soon left Earlsfort Terrace in anything but a pleasant frame of mind.

The same evening the cousins dined at Dr. Smallman's, where they met a distant cousin, Mrs. Macaire, whose brother-in-law had just been married to Mrs. Smallman's sister. The Macaires had come over to Ireland for the wedding, and were on their way back from Cork, where the marriage had taken place and the dinner party was given for them.

Mrs. Macaire was a most charming woman and was delighted to see her cousins. The party was a smaller one than Percy and Harold had expected, but they were glad it was so as it gave them more chance of conversing with their cousin, whom they had not seen for a long time.

About eleven o'clock Mrs. Smallman proposed going to Mrs. Scott's ball, and accordingly her guests soon found themselves making their way up the fashionable doctor's staircase.

The rooms were already very crowded, and the first set of quadrilles was going on when Mrs. Macaire and her companion Harold reached the ball-room.

"What a lovely girl! who is she, Harold?"

"Where?" replied he, in a vacant way as he glanced from face to face.

"Opposite in the quadrille, dancing with an elderly man. She wears a wreath of roses."

"A wreath of roses!" gasped Harold. "Yes, I see her, she is Miss OMahon. I must get introduced."

"Yes, I should advise you to, she is very pretty and looks nice."

The quadrille ended soon, and Harold was thinking of asking Mrs. Scott for an introduction, when he saw his cousin presented to Miss OMahon by their host. Without a word of apology to Mrs. Macaire he followed Dr. Scott, who having presented Percy and some other young men to the fair girl, was about to quit the room.

"Dr. Scott, will you kindly introduce me to Miss OMahon?"

"With pleasure! By Jove! if this is to go on all night, she'll have to dance with

half a dozen of you at a time. Miss O'Mahon, allow me to introduce Captain Detmar."

The fair girl bowed and smiled, and in reply to Harold's request for the pleasure of a dance, handed him her programme.

There were only two dances vacant, a valse and a quadrille. Harold glanced at his card and found to his dismay that for both dances he had already engaged partners, but without a moment's hesitation he asked Eily might he have the two, and as she smiled her acquiescence, he wrote his name opposite both.

Then his next thought was how to arrange with his partners, so he approached Mrs. Smallman.

"Oh! Captain Detmar," she said, when she saw him coming, "I've lost my card and I forget which quadrille I promised you! is it the next or the one after?"

Harold was delighted to get out of the difficulty so easily, and said—

"Our quadrille is number eight."

"All right," said Mrs. Smallman, "then I can give you the next, Mr. Macaire."

Harold next approached Mrs. Macaire, who was carefully studying her programme.

"Look here, Harold!" she said, "I want

you to have another valse instead of number twelve. I've met an old friend with whom I've valed about a million times, and I must have a dance with him for old times' sake, and the only valse he had disengaged was twelve, so to be candid with you I promised to dance it with him, and I hope you'll take another, or let me off."

"That's a shabby trick, Mrs. Macaire ! I've a great mind not to let you off."

"Oh, come now, Harold, you can have any other dance you like."

"Very well," he said, "to please you I submit and will take the next."

"Fortune has favoured me," muttered Harold to himself, "I thought I should have had a difficulty with Madame."

Just then the "Blue Danube" began, and Harold and his partner glided away.

During a pause Mrs. Macaire suddenly started.

"Good gracious !" she exclaimed, "can I believe my eyes ? Do I see the Fowlers ?"

"Yes, do you know them ?" asked her partner.

"What on earth are they doing in Dublin ?"

"They're living here."

"Living here! Why they must be bored to death."

"Nothing of the kind," said Harold, "I fancy they manage to enjoy themselves."

"Yes, they do that everywhere," said Mrs. Macaire, "but their ways are not Dublin ways, and they must shock people because they are, or, at all events, they were decidedly fast."

"Well they are a little bit go-ahead—given to calling men by their Christian names, and that sort of thing," remarked Harold.

"I know at Nice they were very startling," said Mrs. Macaire, "their mother never interfered, indeed I don't believe Mrs. Fowler had any control over them, for they did just as they liked. They went out Sarah Jane fashion, one went one night to the theatre with her young man, and the other went another night with hers. I cannot fathom why they are living in Dublin, the rich husband has not been secured evidently. I must talk to them by-and-by."

At the conclusion of the valse Mrs. Macaire found herself near Ella Fowler, and went up to her.

"How do you do, Miss Fowler?" she

said. "I'm afraid you don't remember me ; the last dance I had the pleasure of meeting you at was at the Grand Hotel, Nice."

"Oh ! Mrs. Macaire, I beg your pardon, I really did not remember you at first," and a flush passed over Ella's face as she extended her hand. "I hope Mr. Macaire is quite well."

"He is here," replied his wife, "you'll see him presently."

"Have you been in Nice lately ?" asked Miss Fowler.

"No ! not since I met you there. Last winter we were in Algiers, and the previous one in Egypt ; we couldn't get away early this season, on account of my brother-in-law's marriage, and next week we start for Nice."

"Indeed ? Ida, here is Mrs. Macaire, don't you remember her ?"

"Oh, yes ! how do you do ? Fancy meeting you in Dublin," said Ida.

"I really am astonished at meeting you here, for Dublin is the last place I should have thought you would have settled in," said Mrs. Macaire, and then turning to Ida, "Don't you remember what I told you about Irishmen ?"

"I don't remember ; what did you tell me?"

"One night I introduced a Mr. Thompson to you, and told you he was a *parti*, for he had at least £6,000 a year, and you replied, 'He wouldn't do, for that £10,000 a year was your lowest figure,' so I advised you never to think of an Irishman, so it surprises me to find you in Dublin, but I daresay you have found out by this time, that £6,000 a year is looked upon as quite a princely income in Ireland."

"Oh, yes ! that is quite true, Mrs. Macaire," said Ella, "there is not much money, but for all that we like Dublin—don't we, Ida ?"

"Certainly ! it is not a bad place at all, and we can go off when we get tired of it," replied her sister. "You have not asked me to dance yet, Captain Detmar," said Ida, turning towards him.

Harold started at hearing his name, he had been buried in thought ; he had noticed Ella Fowler's embarrassed manner, when Mrs. Macaire had spoken of Nice, and he wondered what was the reason, and he remarked that both sisters looked uncomfortable, but he thought that probably they were annoyed with Mrs. Macaire, for telling that little

histoire, about Ida's lowest figure being £10,000 a year, for a good story would be made about it, and Ida's partner, a medical student, grinned from ear to ear when he heard it.

Harold put out his hand in a mechanical way for Ida's programme, and put his name down for a dance.

"It is right for me to tell you, I have not got £10,000 a year," he said, as he handed back her card.

"I don't suppose you have," replied Ida pertly, "if you had, you wouldn't be half so nice. I find it is always the case, the men *I* like most, never have a penny," and she gave a side glance at her partner who seemed flattered, as of course she meant him to be.

Some men are so easily humbugged by flattery. No! not some, but all men!

The music for the next dance began, and the Fowler sisters were soon claimed by their partners. Harold and Mrs. Macaire wandered off to another room, where two whist tables were occupied; Mrs. Fowler was one of the players, but she was so absorbed in the game, that she did not notice Mrs. Macaire, who had no wish to disturb her.

The next dance was the quadrille, and

Harold hurried to claim Miss O'Mahon, and was pleased to find her standing beside her mother, to whom Eily introduced him.

Harold found his partner charming ; her manner was so gentle and winning, that before the quadrille ended, he came to the conclusion that Eily O'Mahon, was quite the nicest girl he had ever met. In the course of conversation, he found out that Wild Park was near Athlone, and he at once made a mental resolve to pay a long promised visit to an old chum, who was stationed there, when Eily should return to the country. She told him they were to remain in Dublin for St. Patrick's ball, and then go home, and in the summer they were coming for a month or two to Kingstown.

"Then I hope we shall meet very often, Miss O'Mahon."

"Maud and I will be very pleased to see you. I hope you will like my sister."

"I am sure to like her, for her sister's sake," said Harold.

"You will be reversing the order of things ; I am just tolerated for Maud's sake."

"I cannot believe that !"

"Well, wait until you see Maud, she is everybody's favourite."

"I promise you she won't be mine."

The quadrille over, Eily was instantly claimed by her next partner, Percy Langrishe, but Harold refused to give her up, until the first notes of the valse were sounded; and Percy had to wait; for Eily was in no hurry to quit Captain Detmar, as he had proved an agreeable partner, and she had enjoyed her chat with him.

When his turn came, Percy did his best to make a favourable impression on the fair girl, but somehow, he did not please her half so well as his cousin; the quarter of an hour had given Harold an advantage. Percy was introduced first, and had engaged her, for the first vacant round dance; but Harold took the quadrille which his cousin had passed over, and the few minutes made a great difference; for Eily looked upon Harold as quite an old acquaintance, when Percy claimed her for his dance.

Harold got his valse later, and managed to get another, for which Eily had been engaged to her brother. When he discovered the engagement, he begged Eily to give the dance to him, but she refused to throw over Gerry.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," said

Harold, "I'll get your brother to throw you over."

"He won't do that."

"Wait, and you'll see," and accordingly, when the time came, she found Gerry deserted her for Miss McWhizzey.

Eily enjoyed her first ball immensely, and when saying good-night to Mr. Martin, thanked him warmly for having got them the invitation. She thought how pleasant it all had been; and smiled at herself in the glass, as she took off her wreath of roses. It never struck her that she had been queen of the ball, she knew a great many men had been introduced to her, who looked terribly disappointed, when they found they could not get a dance. She thought of all her partners, and wondered if she should know them again, and she came to the conclusion, that with the exception of three, she could not remember them, the three were Mr. Martin, Mr. Langrishe and Captain Detmar.

"What a nice name!" she murmured, "Harold Detmar! Harold Detmar! and he told me he thought Eileen the nicest Irish name. I wonder if Maud will like him, and I wonder will he like her."

Eily's eyes were soon closed in slumber,

and her last thought, as she sank off asleep, was about Harold Detmar.

The two cousins left together, and both agreed that Mrs. Scott's ball had been delightful.

"Well! how do you like Miss O'Mahon?" asked Percy.

"Very much indeed! she is charming. What do you think about her?"

"Did she tell you about Maud?"

"About Maud! who is Maud?" asked Harold, quickly.

"Her sister," replied Percy.

"Oh, to be sure! I'd quite forgotten; you rather startled me, I thought it might be the name of some fellow to whom she was engaged. The brother is a nice boy; I asked him to dine with us to-morrow."

"Did you?" said Percy. "Mr. Martin is going to the theatre with Mrs. and Miss O'Mahon. I don't like that man."

"Nor do I," said Harold; "he has a stern, unyielding, dictatorial manner which is exceedingly unpleasant. Mrs. O'Mahon seems to think a lot of him though."

"By Jove! yes!" answered Percy, "he was very attentive to her. I wonder, would her husband be jealous if he knew!"

"Not likely, I should think; Mr. Martin is not the kind of man to captivate any woman; however it is no affair of ours, he may be as attentive as he likes to the mother."

"Good-night, old fellow—happy dreams."

"Same to you, Percy."

The two cousins separated, the "little rift" was coming, but neither knew that, nor did either ever think for a second that anything could lessen their love for each other. From their childhood they had been chums, no dispute or shadow had ever dimmed their almost brotherly love, and both thought that he would do anything, or make any sacrifice for his cousin; as yet their interests had never clashed, but ere long the strength of their friendship would be put to the test.

The Fowler girls also pronounced Mrs. Scott's ball *un grand succès*; they had both enjoyed it, and their particular friends, the jovial militiaman, and the young sub. had been most attentive.

"It was a good ball, Ella," said Ida.

"Yes, very," replied her sister, "but, I'm sorry we met Mrs. Macaire."

"But she has not been at Nice *since then*."

"No; but all the same, I'd rather we

hadn't met her, and it was very awkward her telling about your figure being £10,000 a year, for people will laugh and talk so."

"Oh! never mind; what do I care what people say! for you, of course, it would not be pleasant."

"What do you mean?" asked Ella, "I never did anything that I need feel ashamed about."

"Oh! didn't you?" with a sneer; "I don't suppose you would care for all Dublin to know that you were jilted at the very church door almost."

"You are very disagreeable Ida; but you were made just as great a fool of. You were quite sure that Mr. Sefton would have proposed, as if a man with £10,000 a year could be caught so easily."

"Ma was more disappointed than I was," cried Ida, brusquely, "and, anyhow, I was *not* jilted."

Mrs. Fowler opened the door and just came in a step or two.

"Stop quarrelling, girls, and go to bed. I just came to say that I intend to give a card party on Tuesday, and you can ask one or two young men, so if you go to the rink to-morrow don't forget."

"All right ma," said Ella.

"Don't ask that young Evans, Ida," said Mrs. Fowler; "I won't have him coming here so much; besides he doesn't play, and he prevents you from playing, and I don't want any one who doesn't play. Good-night, girls," and Mrs. Fowler withdrew.

"I'll ask young Evans," said Ida, with a toss of her head, as her mother closed the door.

"If I were you I shouldn't," remarked Ella.

"Why not?" demanded Ida.

"He hasn't got £10,000 a year."

"Ella, you are a nasty, disagreeable, spiteful creature! but at all events I was not left weeping, for nobody jilted me!"

Ida having delivered this volley, flung herself out of the room, and banged the door after her.

Mr. Martin also thought Mrs. Scott's ball delightful; he spent a good part of the evening with Mrs. O'Mahon, whom he found most agreeable. Then his thoughts turned to Eily, and he smiled as he remembered her parting words to him.

"I shall never forget my first ball," she

said, "and when I think of it, I'll remember you."

"Then when you think of me," he replied, "think kindly."

"Most assuredly," she answered, with a smile.

CHAPTER III.

IT soon became very evident that Miss O'Mahon, of Wild Park, Roscommon, was the beauty of the season, for everywhere she was the centre of attraction; no sooner did she appear in a room than she was surrounded by admirers, but, notwithstanding all the attention she received, she was not in the least changed, she was still quiet and retiring, and had a kind word for every one.

Mrs. O'Mahon shortly awoke to the knowledge of Eily's success, and, if possible, the stately matron assumed a more stately mien; she, at all events, was quite alive to the advantages attendant on her daughter's belleship, for of course they were invited everywhere. Mrs. O'Mahon took pains to discover who, among the train of admirers, were eligible, and was rather disgusted to find that the detrimentals were the most numerous, and she took no pains to conceal from them her disapprobation of their pursuit of Eily, and many a time she carried her daughter off early from a ball if she

found that the after-supper engagements were not to her liking.

No matter where Eily and her mother appeared, three men were in constant attendance, they were Mr. Martin, Harold Detmar, and Percy Langrishe.

Mrs. Grundy holds supreme sway in Dublin; there is no place where she has such unlimited license; she talks of everything and everybody; she knows if people ever had a grandfather, who he was, and if he had a father, and all about him. She knows if people have money or have it not; she knows if they owe money and how much; she knows if they can pay and won't, she knows if they gamble, she knows about their meals, their religious views, their homes, their servants, in fact, their very thoughts, and she even speculates where they go to when they "shuffle off this mortal coil."

Then it was no wonder that Mrs. Grundy soon took notice of the O'Mahons.

Her devoted followers, Mrs. and the Misses Fowler, helped her in many of her guesses and surmises. Mrs. Fowler never made an assertion on her own authority, she always said, "Ella tells me so-and-so," or "Ida heard such-and-such," but her daughters.

never beat about the bush, if they had anything to say they said it. A long course of hotel life had made them adepts in the art of spreading gossip. They wanted to know where all the money came from to pay the expenses, for Mrs. and Miss OMahon were always handsomely dressed, and pity was expressed for the too confiding dressmaker. The OMahons had their carriage in town, and frequently Eily and her brother went out riding, when they were invariably joined in the Park by Harold and Percy. Of course Mrs. Grundy noticed that these two young men were the favourites, and she speculated about the end; sometimes she quoted the saying about "two stools," although the cousins were very unlike such articles of furniture; at other times she gave her vote in favour of Percy, for, "of course the girl is not a fool," she said, "and will be sure to snatch up the handkerchief if she gets the chance." Mrs. Grundy considered Harold altogether out of the running; he was only a poor captain, and could not expect to have a chance against his rich cousin, who in time should be Sir Percy, therefore Mrs. Grundy settled the whole affair, Eily would be sure to change her name for that of Langrishe,

there could be no doubt about it. The old lady having thus disposed of Eily, she turned her eyes on Mrs. O'Mahon, and the fair matron got some severe handling, but very much to Mrs. Grundy's annoyance, she could not find any fault in her personal appearance. Mrs. O'Mahon did not enamel, paint, or dye; and her manner and bearing was dignity itself; she was thought proud and exclusive, and, as nothing else could be said, Mrs. Grundy and her followers whispered among themselves that Stephen Martin were a great deal too attentive, and that Mr. O'Mahon ought to come and look after his wife.

The remarks of the ill-natured *coterie* naturally never reached the ears of the O'Mahon family, but the three men heard them. Harold was terribly put out when he learnt what was said, and for a day or two tried to forget Eily, and did not seek her; he knew in worldly advantages he could not compete against his cousin, but he met her by chance, and she looked so reproachfully at him, and asked him "had she offended him in any way, for if she did she was sorry." He forgot all his resolves, and determined he would do his best against all comers, and

try and win the fair girl for himself, and from that moment he was more attentive than ever. He had been told that the O'Mahons were poor, and that the girl would have no fortune, so he concluded that any one who could offer her a competence would be acceptable ; he had a small income as well as his pay, and unlike most military men, he was not in debt ; he didn't owe a penny, and at his mother's death he would come in for £300 a year ; so, taking everything into consideration, he thought it was not presumptuous in trying to win Eily for his bride, so that everywhere that she was seen, Harold Detmar was at one side, and Percy Langrishe at the other. At the rink, Kingstown pier, Exhibition promenades, balls, concerts, theatre, and even at church on Sunday, Eily was always attended by the two cousins, while Mrs. O'Mahon was close by in company with Mr. Martin.

Percy also heard about Mrs. Grundy's remarks ; he heard that she backed him to win, and from the instant that he was told so his ardour cooled. If the world thought the girl mercenary, why there must be some reason for such thoughts, Eily must have shown him some favour openly that he could

not remember about ; he thought that she was always the same in manner to him, and to his cousin ; he could not detect the very slightest difference, but then he remembered lookers-on see the best of the game, and surely people would not say he was the favourite, unless there was some reason for their saying so, and, as he was told, he only had to ask and have, he concluded he would take his time and wait. He wished that another rich suitor would appear on the scene, for then he could know that if Eily accepted him that it was because she loved him; but now—bah ! Of course no girl would reject him for sake of his cousin ; undoubtedly she would say yes, and as he was certain of her he could wait, but in the meantime Master Harold was very troublesome, for he never left Eily's side ; so that if Percy decided to propose, he could hardly find an opportunity of doing so, unless in the pauses of a dance. However he knew his time would come some day, and so he was satisfied to wait, for he felt certain of Eily. He summed up all the pros and cons, and everything was in his favour—birth, position, money ; and as for good looks, why he knew very well that he was handsome.

And what about Harold? In face and figure only were the cousins on equality, in everything else Percy had the pull, and he knew well that few girls in the nineteenth century are indifferent to the advantages offered by position and wealth.

Mrs. Grundy did not think Eily would prove an exception, and as she and her *coterie* decided in Percy's favour, he was quite satisfied to watch and wait.

Mr. Martin also heard what the gossips said of him and Mrs. OMahon, and as he traced a little *histoire* home to Miss Fowler, he determined to let that demoiselle know that she must not select him to talk about; so, accordingly, very much to the astonishment of the Fowler family, he arrived one day to pay them a visit; they had often asked him to come, but he had never accepted their invitation. It was not their "day," and Mrs. Fowler was not at home—in other words, she was not prepared for visitors, so the two sisters did their best to entertain Mr. Martin. Gradually he led the conversation round to the point he desired.

"Oh, yes!" cried Ella, "there is not a doubt of it, Mr. Langrishe is the favourite."

"I don't agree with you, Miss Fowler."

"She isn't mad enough to take his cousin in preference," remarked Ida. "Captain Detmar is about as poor as she is."

"But her expectations," quietly said Mr. Martin, "what about them?"

"I should think they value a big nought," replied Ida.

"Or half a dozen noughts," added her sister.

"There you are both mistaken," said Mr. Martin. "You are aware that Mrs. O'Mahon is English, her relatives are wealthy, and they keep up a correspondence with her, although they have never noticed her husband. Her aunt, Miss Ferrers, an old maid, paid for the education of the two girls; she saw them for the first time last Christmas on their return from France, and was struck by their beauty. She is paying all the expenses of this season in Dublin, and she has promised if the girls marry to please her, to dower them. Miss Ferrers is most liberal, and, Miss Fowler, there is no necessity for your pitying the too confiding dressmakers! You now know *where* the money comes from, so you need not again insinuate that Mrs. O'Mahon has been spending more than her husband knows about."

Ella Fowler crimsoned to the very roots of

her hair, as she recognised her own words, she felt very uncomfortable, but thought it best to put on a bold face.

"How nice to have a rich aunt," she said, "that explains the mystery, for of course everybody knows that Mr. O'Mahon is as poor as a rat; it was only natural that people should wonder where the money came from, for their dresses are always expensive. What a pity men don't know the girl will have a fortune!"

"Pray don't say anything about that, as Miss Ferrers is bound in no way, and I understand that of the two girls she prefers the younger; but Miss O'Mahon will marry well," continued Mr. Martin, "at all events I am sure she will never be jilted by a man! It must be very awkward for a girl to have her wedding dress bought, the day named, and then for the man to change his mind, and how unpleasant for the girl if people know about it and talk—pretty dickey bird! sweety! sweety!" and Mr. Martin poked his finger through the bars of the canary's cage. Dickey made mimic war against the intruder, and seemed delighted with the attention.

At their visitor's words, the girls looked

at each other, Ella's muddy complexion paled to a sickly white, and she and her sister seemed tongue-tied.

After a pause Mr. Martin went on—

“There is too much talk in Dublin, and there is an old saying, ‘People in glass houses, ought not to throw stones,’ and therefore people ought not to talk, if they do not wish their own affairs to be talked about. Don’t you think I’m right, Miss Fowler?” and he turned and faced the sisters.

“Yes! Mr. Martin,” answered Ida, “people talk a great deal too much.”

“They do,” said Ella, in a low tone.

“I knew you would agree with me; goodbye! dickey bird!” with another poke at the cage. “I must be going now, sorry to have missed your mother.” Mr. Martin stood up and walked to the other side of the room, and looked at a large photograph of Geneva, then at another hanging near, of Chamounix. “Charming place that,” he said, tapping the frame, “I had a delightful *séjour* at Chamounix last summer; I met two capital fellows, both Germans, we joined together and went to Zermatt. I got on so well with them. *Baron Sternberg* spoke

English fluently, and so did Herr Rueff, we had a very jolly time together."

Mr. Martin stood a few seconds looking at the photograph, and then turned and took his leave of the sisters.

He was hardly out of the room when Ella burst into tears.

"Oh! what does he mean?" she sobbed, "he came here just to say that, I'm sure."

"Yes! I agree with you," said Ida, "and it is very easy to see what he means, it is quite clear enough."

"What does he mean?" asked Ella, and she looked up wiping her eyes.

"He has heard what you said about him and Mrs. O'Mahon," answered Ida, "and he just came here to warn you, that if you talk any more about them, why that he will tell the story of how you were jilted, he evidently knows all about it. He told a lie all the same, for he was not in Switzerland last summer, don't you remember"—

"Then why did he say he was there?" interrupted Ella.

"Because he wanted to bring in Sternberg's name, did you remark the stress he put on it? he must know him; but last year he was in Germany. Don't you remember

his talking about the early dinners and the drilling of the soldiers?"

"Yes, I do!" replied Ella, "so he meant it as a threat! Well, Stephen Martin I owe you one, and I'll pay it to you yet, but all the same for heaven's sake, Ida, say nothing more about the O'Mahons; leave them alone."

"I think you had better practise what you preach," pertly replied her sister, "you are the talker!"

"Come now Ida, that is not fair."

"Well, *n'importe!* mum is the word henceforth. Say nothing to ma, about what Mr. Martin said, it is just as well to keep her in the dark."

"Certainly!" replied Ella. "Oh! how I hate this place! I wish we could get away from Dublin, I'm sick of it."

"Then I am not! Don't try that little game on, Ella, for I warn you, I won't have it; if you try to move the mother it will be the worse for you, for here I mean to stay!"

"Oh! very well!" sighed Ella, as she left the room.

Ida Fowler was the younger and the smaller, but she managed to rule her mother and elder sister; sometimes they tried to

have their way but they invariably gave in to her in the end, for they knew there would be no peace, unless they did so. Ida ruled with an iron hand, she was inflexible, her will was law, and she had immense power over her mother.

Ella often wanted her sister to use her influence with Mrs. Fowler to prevent her gambling and betting, but a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind, and Ida was fond of a little game herself, and therefore would not interfere.

As long as Mrs. Fowler was winning Ella did not mind, it was only when a losing game was played, that she tried to interfere.

CHAPTER IV.

THINGS went on just the same, and the season was drawing to an end, still was Eily the centre of attraction, and she was still invariably attended everywhere by Harold and Percy.

Mrs. O'Mahon had intended returning to the country immediately after St. Patrick's ball, but she had been persuaded to say she would stay, for Fairy House races, which would take place about a fortnight later.

Percy determined that for once he would elude the vigilance of his cousin, and that he should try his fate at St. Patrick's ball, he thought it was time to put an end to Harold's attentions ; he would ask Eily to be his wife, and he felt sure her answer would be yes. For a moment he felt sorry for his cousin, but then he thought, what business had Harold to put himself in rivalry with him ? When they were boys together Harold had always given in to him in everything, and now when the question was one of vital importance, he should have left the course clear.

Eily's name was never mentioned by the cousins, they were apparently on friendly terms, but in the heart of each, enmity was slumbering, a little thing would arouse it, and the long years of love and friendship would avail nought.

A fair face had come between them, and never again would Harold and Percy be, what once they were to each other.

Harold, too, decided that he would know his fate, he loved Eily passionately, and somehow he felt that his love was returned, hope whispered so. He thought her voice was softer when she spoke to him, yet she never seemed put out, at the constant attendance of Percy, and she always appeared glad to see him also. Harold often felt that he could choke his cousin, he would do anything to get rid of him, but he would stand it no longer; at St. Patrick's ball he would tell Eily of his love, even if he were obliged to do so, in the presence of Percy or Mr. Martin; for lately that gentleman had assumed a kind of paternal air towards Eily; and Harold, quick to understand where his love was concerned, began to think that Mr. Martin watched Eily at her mother's suggestion.



He was quite right in so thinking, for Mrs. O'Mahon confided to Mr. Martin her suspicion, that of the two cousins Eily preferred the least eligible; and that she was anxious to get the girl home. Mr. Martin comforted her with the assurance that he would do his best to prevent any declaration of love by Harold, and, as far as Percy was concerned, he doubted if he had any serious intentions. This alarmed Mrs. O'Mahon very much, for in Percy she saw a probable son-in-law; and she had even written to Miss Ferrers, and told her that he was paying very marked attention to Eily. The old lady wrote in reply that she was glad to hear it, and that she would give her grand-niece a dowry.

It was a pity Mrs. O'Mahon had not been more explicit; oh! if she had only told everything how different would have been Eily's fate! If she had written the whole truth she would have secured the happiness of her daughter. She never mentioned about Harold Detmar. How could she know that deep in the old maid's heart dwelt a name, and that the name was George Detmar. In her youth Miss Ferrers had loved, and had loved in vain; George Detmar never knew, and no one ever guessed, that she remained

unmarried, because she was faithful to her love dream. George married, and she knew there was a son; and in her will, Harold, the son of her friend George Detmar, was named as the chief legatee.

Miss Ferrers had never seen Harold, and had no wish to see him, but when she saw Eily and Maud the thought struck her if one of them were to marry Harold Detmar how pleased she would be. When her niece married Mr. O'Mahon, Miss Ferrers made a vow that a penny of her money should never go to him or his wife, and she was determined to keep to her resolve; but still she felt she was doing an injustice to her own in leaving her wealth to a stranger. It was odd, considering that Harold Detmar's name was in her will, that she took no interest in his movements; she knew he had entered the army, and that was about all; if she had known about his regiment she would have known he was in Dublin, and then she might have said something which would have shown that she was interested in the young man. The only thing she said was, "Beware of soldiers, keep them away from your daughter; they are deceivers ever, they make love without meaning it, so don't trust them."

George Detmar was a soldier, and he had made love without meaning it. That was the reason why Mrs. O'Mahon said nothing about Harold ; he was a soldier, and after the old lady's warning she did not like to say that Eily had a military admirer ; but oh ! the pity of it ! Alas ! poor Eily ! and alas ! poor Harold ! how different things might have been !

The evening of the ball arrived, and both Harold and Percy hurried to the Castle, each with the firm resolve of declaring his love before the night was over. Harold thought—

“ When the matter is decided, Percy and I shall be friends again, for I know he does not love her, he does not really care, he could not eat and sleep as he does if he were in love ; but even if he were he must submit to my being his successful rival.”

Harold entered the ball-room with an elastic step and joyous mien ; he glanced quickly around, and saw that the O'Mahons had not yet arrived, for it was early, and the hall was nearly empty, but every moment there were fresh arrivals. Percy slowly sauntered in, and passed his cousin with a cool nod, and then took up his position at a

little distance off, where he could have a view of the entrance.

Time went on, and there was no sign of the O'Mahons ; the opening country dance had been gone through, and the beautiful Miss O'Mahon was still absent. That very morning Harold and Percy had seen Eily, for she had been present at the annual ceremony of relieving guard. Harold had lost his shamrock, and she divided her bunch with him. Poor little trefoils ! Little did Eily dream how they would be treasured by Harold to the last hour of his life.

Mrs. and Miss O'Mahon were quite well in the morning, and promised to come early, for they wanted to see the country dance which always opens St. Patrick's ball.

This particular dance is not what it ought to be, it is not a good rollicking, old-fashioned country dance ; danced to old-fashioned music, which would cause every nerve to vibrate, and make even the old wish to join in the measure. No ; this country dance is a sham, it is not worthy of the name ; it is a kind of solemn procession, timed to the music of "God save the Queen," and "St. Patrick's Day," a few bars of each played alternately.

Fancy trying to step a jolly country dance to the stately music of the National Anthem! Does the absurdity of the thing never strike any one? It is just as ridiculous as Americans dancing the "Boston" to the music of the "Lancers."

How well I remember the astonishment of a German, who chanced to be present once.

"*Ach Gott!*" he exclaimed, "what do I hear?"

He looked from the orchestra to the dancers, and from them back to the musicians, and as the music changed he seemed relieved; but then it changed again and yet again, and the dance ended before he could understand what it was all about. His amazement was amusing, and perhaps his views were right; he considered it a profanation to dance to the air of the National Anthem.

"How poor your country must be in music," he said; "I wonder you could not have something more danceable."

Yet there are danceable Irish tunes, but they are forgotten, or are only heard at a cross-road dance in Connaught; but how merrily the boys and girls foot it to the tune

of "The Geese on the Bogs," or "The Fox-hunter," or some such old Irish air, the very sound of which suggests dancing.

Harold began to get very uneasy about the absence of the O'Mahon party, and a thousand wild ideas crossed his brain. He thought of a carriage accident, and then he remembered hearing once of a girl who caught fire just as she was dressed ready for a ball, and was burnt to death. The dreadful idea made him feel ill; he could bear the suspense no longer, he would go to her house. But just as he approached the door he saw the tall figure of Mr. Martin and with him Mrs. O'Mahon. Oh! the relief of that moment! Eily was safe, she was coming; but no, her brother followed alone, Eily did not come.

Percy also saw Mrs. O'Mahon's arrival, and both he and Harold reached her at the same moment.

"Where is Miss O'Mahon?" was the eager question.

"She heard of the death of a friend and would not come," replied Mrs. O'Mahon. "Of course you wonder to see me here, but Eily's friend was her teacher in Germany. I never saw the lady, so I could not be ex-

pected to mourn for her. Indeed, I thought Eily might very well come, but she would not. I was quite provoked."

Harold and Percy expressed their regrets at Miss O'Mahon's absence, and though it was a great disappointment to Harold, he thought it showed nice feeling on Eily's part to remain away from a brilliant ball, as a mark of respect to the memory of her teacher.

Percy said it was a bore, and forthwith went off in search of partners, for Eily's absence would not prevent him from enjoying himself, and he could do so all the more as he would not have to keep a watch on his cousin.

Harold lounged against one of the pillars at the entrance; he cared for no one in that large and brilliant assembly; brave men and fair maids passed without his even seeing them. He was absolutely alone amid a crowd, he saw them not, his thoughts were far away. He was thinking of his mother, and wondering how she would welcome the fair Eily as her daughter.

Suddenly a hand touched him.

"What a brown study you are in, Captain Detmar," said Ella Fowler. "I nodded to you half a dozen times, and you never noticed me."

"Ten thousand pardons," he replied, "I really did not see you."

"Yes, I thought so! You were in a reverie, and now that I have disturbed you I hope you will forgive me. I know you are good-natured," she continued, "and I want you to do something for me. Will you take my mother to get some supper? I don't believe she has even had a cup of tea, and must want something. I know it will bore you, but as you were not dancing I thought I might ask you."

"I'll take your mother to supper with pleasure, Miss Fowler," replied Harold in a hearty voice; "and it will not bore me. Where is she?"

"Just yonder. Very many thanks."

"No thanks are necessary."

Ella and her partner joined the dancers, while Harold went in search of Mrs. Fowler.

"Will you come have some supper? Your daughter told me you have not had any yet."

"No indeed, Captain Detmar," she said, rising from her seat; "I began to think the girls had forgotten me."

Harold and Mrs. Fowler made their way

through the dancers to the supper room, where he succeeded in getting her a good place, and then supplied her with mayonaise, iced champagne, and such delicacies as she fancied.

"How is it," she said, when somewhat refreshed, "that I do not see Miss O'Mahon here to-night? I hope she is not ill?"

"No, she is quite well. She heard of the death of her schoolmistress, and would not come."

"What a lovely girl she is! She will be sure to marry well, more especially when her expectations are known."

"Expectations!" exclaimed Harold. "I never heard she had any."

"It appears her grand-aunt, Miss Ferrers, is very rich," replied Mrs. Fowler, "and she will dower the girl if she marries well. The old lady will give nothing if she weds a poor man who wants money, but if she marries a rich one who does not want it, she will give a fortune. It seems an odd way to arrange matters."

"But who told you this?" incredulously inquired Harold.

"Nobody told me," she replied, "but the girls heard it from Mr. Martin, so it must be

true, as he knows all the ins and outs of the family *sans doute*, and now I think I'll get back to my seat."

Harold piloted her safely to her anchorage, took his leave, and at once returned home. There was no attraction for him, so there was no use in staying.

This news about the rich grand-aunt disturbed him very much, and he wished he had not heard it. He was a poor man, at least he was not rich, still he wanted nothing with Eily. Yet, would it be right for him to ask her to share a bare competence, and by so doing cut off her chance of inheriting her rich relative's wealth? No. It would not be right to drag her into poverty. He would go off abroad, somewhere, and try to forget her.

Forget her? Impossible! No, he would stay, and if she loved him there was a happy future in store for them.

CHAPTER V.

Good-bye ! Word often spoken,
Oft, too, with a sigh ;
Of friendship 'tis the token.
Who parts without good-bye ?

It was long past noon when Percy awoke next morning. While dressing, he asked his valet if his cousin had risen yet, and was told that Captain Detmar had gone out. This news made him hasten through his toilet and breakfast, and then he hurried off to the club, where he found his cousin in the reading-room.

“All right,” thought Percy, “he has not gone there, it is too early to go yet.” So he turned into the card-room, where he lounged about for a while, and then returned to the reading-room, where Harold was no longer to be seen.

Percy at once started for Mrs. O’Mahon’s, and as he reached the door his cousin approached from the other direction. They both ascended the steps together, but neither spoke.

Mrs. O’Mahon was at home, and when they

entered the drawing-room they found her writing.

On the sofa at the other end of the room Eily was seated, and beside her was Mr. Martin, who had his hands outstretched, holding a thick skein of wool, which Eily was winding off on a ball.

Mr. Martin was quite a tame cat in the O'Mahon's drawing-room, but he didn't like being caught in such occupation by the two young men.

How ridiculous a man looks when employed in feminine work, and the bigger he is the more absurd he seems. A little man might try to knit, sew, or crochet, and he would only look foolish; but if a big man were to try to do the same he would appear fifty times more ridiculous than his little brother.

Mr. Martin felt that he was in an absurd position, and made an inward vow that never again would he hold wool for anybody.

"How do you do?" said Eily, "you must not scold me for not going last night. Take care, Mr. Martin, you dropped some of the wool, and it will all get in a tangle. Perhaps you are tired holding it?"

"Not at all, I assure you," he replied.

"Well, you both forgive me. I am sure you would have been sorry if you knew how wretched I was, not for myself, though. I liked and respected Fraulein, but Maudie positively adored her; and she is awfully grieved, she is miserable!"

"Yes, indeed!" said Mrs. OMahon, "the poor child cried herself to sleep the other night, and my husband tells me she has hardly eaten a morsel since she heard the news. It is her first grief, and is hard to bear."

"Now I release you, Mr. Martin. Many thanks for your patience," said Eily, as she wound off the end of the wool. Then, turning towards Harold—"Tell me, how did you enjoy the ball, Captain Detmar? Tell me all about it; I want to hear."

Harold told her it was a brilliant ball, but that he did not enjoy it; and, as he spoke, he looked at Eily.

For a second their eyes met, then hers were lowered; but in that second she knew why he did not enjoy the ball, and he felt that she knew.

The conversation became general; they all talked about the ball, about who was there, and what they wore; about the com-

ing races and about a hundred other things, and then Percy asked when would she again go for a long country ride.

"I was asking Gerry to-day," she replied, "and he said, perhaps to-morrow or next day."

"Let it be to-morrow, and may we"—he hesitated and corrected himself—"May I come?"

"Oh, yes! if you like." She gave a quick glance at Harold; she wondered if he would come also.

He understood.

"Percy and I will join you," he said. "Shall we come here, or shall we meet you at the Park gates?"

"At the Park, please," said Mrs. O'Mahon rather stiffly. "Eily and Gerry will meet you at twelve o'clock, weather permitting, of course."

Soon afterwards the cousins left, but went away as they had come without speaking, and when outside they separated.

Percy called a car and drove off to Beggar's Bush to see a friend, while Harold went back to barracks.

Next morning was lovely spring weather. Harold was awake early, and when he saw

the bright blue sky he thought it a good omen. Yes, it was just the day to speak of love.

Le jour où Sylvain m'a parlé,
Tout était beau dans la nature
Le ruisseau sur son lit sablé,
Courait avec un gai murmure.

It was the very day to talk of love, and well, if all ended as he expected, his life with Eily would be as cloudless as yon blue vault.

Harold had finished breakfast when Percy appeared. He nodded to his cousin, and then sat down at the table. Once or twice he glanced round at Harold, but he seemed deeply engaged in the paper. At last he threw it aside.

"There is absolutely nothing in it," he said.

"Indeed!" answered Percy.

Harold noticed the tone of voice, and looked round quickly. Only one word had been said; but it was enough. Harold knew that his cousin had more to say, and waited, but Percy did not speak. For a few seconds they looked at each other in silence.

"Well?" at last asked Harold in a low voice.

"I suppose you can guess very well what I have got to say!"

"I am a bad hand at guessing," replied Harold.

"Well, then, I want to know what you mean?"

"What I mean? I don't understand you."

"You must be very dense! I want to know what you mean about her?"

"About her? Who? Has she a name?" asked Harold quietly.

He knew very well who Percy meant, but he wanted his cousin to name her.

"How provoking you are! I refer to Miss O'Mahon, and I want to know what you mean?"

"Mean how?" asked Harold in a low tone.

"Your attentions are very marked, and I find you troublesome."

"Did it never strike you that I find you troublesome?"

"Well, then you must submit to find me troublesome," replied Percy, "but I intend to put an end to this, for I mean to propose to her."

"Are you quite sure she'll accept you?" asked Harold.

“ Of course she will ! ”

“ I may as well tell you that I love her, and I mean to ask her to be my wife. I fancy she will say ‘ Yes ; ’ in fact I’m sure of it, so to save yourself getting ‘ No ’ for your answer I should recommend you to leave the course clear, and ” —

“ By heaven ! I’ll do nothing of the kind,” cried Percy, “ but you ought to leave it clear for me ! How dare you put yourself in rivalry with me ! The idea is too absurd ; of course the girl would never hesitate between us an instant.”

“ Oh ! ” said Harold, “ is that the opinion you have of the girl you think of asking to be your wife ? If you think she will accept you in preference to me, because you are a baronet’s son and his heir, then all I can say is, if she does accept you, for that reason I’ll not regret her ! She would not be worthy of a thought ! ”

Percy saw that he had made a mistake in attributing mercenary motives to Eily, and was vexed with himself for having spoken, and called himself a “ damned idiot ” in a low tone.

Harold heard the words, and asked were they addressed to him ?

Percy had risen that morning à tort et à travers, and the discussion with his cousin had not improved his temper, and very little more would put him in a passion. He did not reply to Harold's question, who again asked—

“ Were the words meant for me ? ”

“ If the cap fits you can wear it,” sulkily responded Percy.

“ Then I may consider that you called me a damned idiot ! Then let me tell you that you are a damned fool, and you'll find it out soon enough.”

One word led to another, and these two men, who had been babies together, boys together, who had loved each other beyond all men, said such bitter words in the heat of their passion that never again could be forgotten. Their tie of blood, their mothers who were devoted to each other, and who would be deeply grieved at the knowledge of this quarrel, the happy days of their childhood, their school days, the boyish pranks they had played together, their college days, all, all were forgotten. They thought of nothing but that they were rivals, and they hated each other with the hatred that is born of love for a woman !

Eily's fair face had come between them, and had raised a barrier that nought else could have done.

Harold's terrier Vixen was lying on the hearth-rug when the quarrel began. She knew every tone of his voice, and she knew that something was hurting him. In an instant she was alert, rushed across the room, jumped on his knee and tried to caress his face. Harold, without knowing it, roughly pushed her off, and the poor little beast fell on the floor with a whine. Percy's voice was raised in anger, and Vixen guessed he was annoying her master, she sprang on his knee and half barked, half whined in his face. He pushed her away and stood up.

Vixen, seeing that her efforts to stop the war of words were futile, tried other tactics, which in the end succeeded. She commenced to bark loudly and incessantly. Soon the cousins had to stop for they could not hear each other's voice. But Vixen still continued barking, and at last Conway, Harold's servant, came to see what was the matter.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I thought something must be wrong, Vixen was making such a row."

The little animal stopped her noise the

instant Conway opened the door, and she wriggled her lithe, little body towards him in a deprecating way, as much as to say, "I really couldn't help it ; it was the only way to stop them ! "

Harold had turned to the window, and was looking out into the barrack square. He did not speak to his servant.

"Take the brute away," said Percy, "and tell my man to pack up my things."

"Yes, sir ! Come, Vixen ! "

But Vixen would not go. She wagged her tail and ran over to the window where Harold was standing, jumped on a chair, and managed to manœuvre her nose into his hand. At the cold touch Harold remembered how he had repulsed her a little while ago. How soon she forgot his harshness, and he caressed her tenderly.

Poor little doggie, her faithful heart was gladdened by her master's kind words.

He still stood gazing out into the square ; but there was nothing to see. Is there ever anything in any barrack square to look at ?

He saw nothing. He was thinking of the bitter words that had passed between him and Percy, and he felt sorry, not for the things that had been said, but for the dis-

appointment that he felt sure his cousin would meet with soon.

He still looked out. Two little urchins were below, they were playing pitch-and-toss. One accused the other of unfair play, and in a second they were at it, pell-mell boxing each other with all their might. A sergeant was passing, he stopped the urchins in their fight, and inquired what it was all about. He heard the pros and cons, and evidently settled the affair to the satisfaction of both (a penny did it), for they went away together as friendly as if nothing had happened.

Harold watched them, saw the peacemaker interfere, saw the result, and wondered if ever again there could be peace between him and his cousin.

He thought never again !

By-and-by he saw a commissionnaire enter the square. He knew the man—he had seen him often, and had employed him, and he wondered for whom was his message.

Soon Conway entered with a letter for Mr. Langrishe.

Percy read it through, then read it again, and seemed as if he were going to speak, but stopped short, and put the letter in his

pocket. After a minute he took it out, put it back again, took it out, and finally placed it on the table.

"There is a letter," he said, "you can read it, and if she loves you, as you say, why didn't she write to you instead of me? They are going home to-day," and then he left the room.

Harold only understood the words "they are going home to-day." He left his post in the window, took up the letter and read it. Only a few lines saying that Mrs. O'Mahon had got a letter from home that morning. Maud was ill, so of course they were leaving town at once, and there could be no ride; they were to start by the 4 P.M. train.

There was a postscript, it ran as follows—"Will you say good-bye to Captain Detmar for me."

And that was all!

The last words of her note were about him, she was thinking of him, although she wrote to his cousin. Harold pressed his lips on the paper where the postscript was written; he was not jealous that her note was sent to Percy, for he guessed, that probably her mother had told her to write to him.

But that good-bye would not satisfy him,

he must see her once again, probably he should not be able to say what he wanted to, but at all events he meant to go to Athlone, and while there he would see her at Wild Park. He hurried off to St. Stephen's Green, and found his cousin and Mr. Martin both there ; they were trying to calm Mrs. O'Mahon who was quite bewildered, a telegram had just arrived, saying that Maud had passed a very feverish night. Poor Eily seemed dumb, and her eyes were filled with tears as she was gathering up little odds-and-ends about the room.

Gerry soon returned, he had been to telegraph that they were going home ; he too was awfully put out.

“ Come now mother ! ” he said, “ you must look sharp and see about your packing, and Eily too, or you'll never be ready. You must excuse my mother and sister,” he continued, turning to their visitors.

Of course it was a hint for them to take their departure, they were not wanted, and they were in the way, so they said good-bye. As Harold pressed Eily's hand, he saw her lips quiver, for a second she raised her eyes to his, as she murmured farewell, and then Mr. Martin came forward.

At the Broadstone terminus, the O'Mahons were met by Mr. Martin, Harold and Percy. Each had determined to see the last of the fair girl, never dreaming that the other had the same idea. Percy did not come empty-handed, for he carried a basket ornamented with flowers and ferns, in which were some superb grapes nestling in vine leaves.

"Invalids like these," he said, "so I brought you this basket for your sister. Will you give it to her from me?"

"Certainly! and I'm sure she will be very grateful."

In a few minutes the bell sounded, the doors were banged, and the train bore away the fair Eily.

The same evening Percy started for London, he went without again seeing Harold, or leaving any message for him.

There was no good-bye between them!

CHAPTER VI.

PERCY remained some days in London, and then went down to his home in Yorkshire. Fernleigh was a splendid old place, and Percy was fond of it, although he spent but little of his time there, he could not get on with his father, at least he said he couldn't, and certainly he never tried.

Sir Charles was a little, fiery-looking man, he had a dark, sallow, complexion, black hair, somewhat grizzled, and eyes like round, black beads, which seemed to look one through and through ; they were staring, inquisitive, penetrating eyes. He could not understand why his son should be fair and blue-eyed ; and often said, " He is not a Langrishe, there never was a fair Langrishe."

The baronet was the very soul of punctuality, and no one could commit a greater offence in his eyes than being late a minute for anything.

The household at Fernleigh was managed like clockwork, a bell rang for the servants to rise, and if that bell were a minute late, there

was no peace for any one that day. A gong sounded for prayers, then there was the gong again, for breakfast; for lunch, for dinner, for the servants' meals, for their hour of re-creation, for evening prayers, for this, that, and the other thing, and if the sound broke on the air a second too late, Sir Charles would ask in angry tones, the cause of the delay.

There was at least one clock, in every room in the house, there was one in every passage, nook and corner, and every pantry had two, every clock was in perfect order and kept regular time, and all the servants wore watches, so there was no excuse for any one being late for anything.

Percy from his childhood was always late, he was never in time; when a boy in fear and trembling he would enter just a second or two after prayers began, and then when they were ended his father would reprimand him in harsh tones. As he got older he gave up attending prayers altogether, and then he began to get late for breakfast, and one day Sir Charles told him if he did not choose to breakfast when he and Lady Langrishe took theirs, he might go to the housekeeper's room.

Percy answered that "hours were made

for slaves, and that he would not be a slave for any one." From that day, whenever he was at Fernleigh, he had his breakfast in his sitting-room, or own particular den as he called it.

Sir Charles Langrishe had his hobby, and he rode it to the death, his hobby was time, and if no one thwarted him he was quiet enough, and as the peace of the household depended on punctuality, every one vied with each other in having the work of every minute performed within its limit, and probably there was not another house in England where everything was got through with such regularity.

Sir Charles and Lady Langrishe have been alone since Christmas, but Percy has written to announce his return home, and now they are awaiting his arrival. Lady Langrishe was a pretty, fair girl once, but time has not dealt kindly with her, she looks faded and worried, and appears older than she really is. She has taken out her watch and looked at it furtively several times, there is no necessity for her doing so, for on the mantel-piece there is a handsome French clock, on the console to her right there is a Dresden-china one, on the bracket to her left a Sèvres,

and on the console behind a Louis Quinze clock.

They are all going, and they are all exact to the second, the hands point to twenty minutes past six.

Tick! tick! tick! the clocks go on, and there is no other sound, Lady Langrishe looks at her watch again and wonders will he come in time, yes! in time, that is her whole anxiety about her son's arrival, that is all she thinks of, but the peace of the house depends on Percy's arriving in time for dinner. True he might be delayed, the train might be late, there might be some cause that would be no fault of his, but there would be no excuse in the baronet's opinion; he had written to say he should arrive for dinner, and if he didn't the fault was his.

At last the tick, tick, tick, is broken by another sound, the trotting of a horse is heard, and soon the noise of approaching wheels. Sir Charles looks at his watch.

"What a wonder," he says, "for once in his life, he is in time."

In a few minutes Percy entered the drawing-room, and was warmly embraced by his mother, Sir Charles shook his son's hand.

"I hope you'll go on as you have begun,"

he said, "you are in time, but you had better look sharp and get ready for dinner."

"Yes, father," replied Percy.

He did look sharp, and was in the drawing-room at least two minutes before the dinner gong sounded. He made himself very pleasant, and had a good deal to say about his visit to Ireland ; he returned to Fernleigh with the firm determination of making himself agreeable to Sir Charles, and of humouring his whims ; he would try to please him in every way, and after a time would tell him about Eily.

Once Sir Charles said, "When you marry, Percy, you must wed a woman with dark eyes, and black hair. I made a mistake in marrying a fair woman ; you are the first fair Langrishe, and there mustn't be any more."

Percy loved to worry his father, and so he replied—

"I can't abide a woman with black hair ; when I choose a wife she must have golden locks."

"Then I'll never receive her, or acknowledge her," angrily answered his father. "Mark my words, I'll have no fair woman for a daughter-in-law. Marry whoever you like—a barmaid if you choose—but unless

she has black hair she never enters here until I am gone."

Percy remembered these words, by-and-by he would recall them to his father's memory; he knew Sir Charles was very anxious to see him married, and he did not anticipate much difficulty in getting his consent to a marriage with Eily. She had dark hair, and dark eyes, and he had heard about Miss Ferrers and the promised dowry, for Ida Fowler told him at St. Patrick's ball. He knew that the O'Mahons belonged to a good old Irish family, and the Ferrers were very old people, so on the point of birth there was nothing against Eily, and if the rich grand-aunt gave her a fortune all would be right. Sir Charles Langrishe was very wealthy, but, for all that, Percy thought there would not be a warm welcome for a dowerless bride, and so he was glad when he heard about Miss Ferrers from Ida Fowler.

After dinner Sir Charles asked—

"Are the Irish girls as pretty as you expected to find them?"

"Yes, father, there are a great many pretty girls in Dublin."

"Tell me who they are, their names; tell me all about them."

"Well, let me see," said Percy, in a doubtful voice, "it would be hard to name all, for there are a great many, but amongst the girls I knew, there were two Miss McWhizzeys, a Miss Vaughan, a Miss Blake, another Miss Blake, but no relation to number one, a Miss O'Connell; and, let me see, who else, oh! yes, Miss O'Mahon and—two Miss Fowlers, and, oh! a lot more."

"Well, we'll begin with the last. What are the Miss Fowlers like?"

"Well, indeed," said Percy, with a grin, "I oughtn't to have named them among the pretty girls, for they are anything but that, but they are awfully jolly, and they taught me to rink."

"What are they like? Describe them. Are they dark or fair?"

"They are as dark as you are, just your complexion," answered Percy, smiling; he understood the drift of his father's question. "Ida, the younger, is a merry little devil, ready for any lark; the elder is sentimental, and given to quoting poetry, but it is a mistake on her part; plain-looking girls who are not very young—shouldn't go in for being romantic."

"Tell me about the other girls; are they fair or dark?"

Percy smiled at the baronet's question, a little while ago, and he would have delighted in mystifying the old gentleman, but he replied promptly—

"The Miss McWhizzeys are dark, gipsy-looking girls; Miss Blake, number one, is very dark—they say too much coffee—her grand-mother came from Jamaica, or somewhere; the other Miss Blake is a fair-haired doll, who hasn't a word to say, but is very pretty—she knows it—and she poses; Miss Vaughan is brown-haired, and blue-eyed; Miss O'Connell fair and namby-pamby, and I think that's all."

"No! no!" answered Sir Charles. "You named nine, seven pretty girls and the two Miss Fowlers."

"Oh, of course, how could I forget Miss OMahon!" (he had not forgotten, and he knew very well Sir Charles would ask, for he counted the names on his fingers), "she is about the prettiest of them all, she has dark, wavy hair and blue eyes."

"H'm!" said Sir Charles; "do you admire her more than the fair-haired doll, Miss Blake?" and he gave a keen look at his son.

"Most assuredly I do," replied he, in a hearty tone.

Sir Charles would have liked to ask more

questions, but he was afraid Percy might resent his doing so, and would either not reply, or give equivocal answers. He was very anxious that his son should marry, yet not for the world would he tell him so, for if he spoke of marriage he thought Percy would at once declare that he had no intention of settling down.

How often fathers spoil the prospect of a marriage by interference; if they let things alone many a match, that was wished for and planned, might come off; but they, in their eagerness to arrange things, are too precipitate, they want to push matters on, and they generally succeed in bringing the affair to an untimely end.

There can be no more clumsy match-maker than a father.

Some time previously Sir Charles had arranged in his own mind a marriage for Percy; the young lady was the only daughter of a neighbouring baronet, and on both sides it would have been a most desirable match, but the girl never even gave Percy a chance, for she fell in love with a handsome young curate, when she was in short petticoats, and as she was a spoilt darling she got her way, and got her curate.

Sir Charles was very anxious for Percy's

marriage ; he longed to see an heir born to his son ; he was afraid that something might happen to him, and then a cousin, whom he detested, would be heir to the baronetcy and estates. This cousin often thought what a good chance he had, only one life in his way, and wondered, with exceeding wonder, why the baronet did not get his son married.

Sir Charles could not refrain from asking about the Dublin girls, and he listened with eyes and ears to all his son said ; he noticed a slight hesitation in Percy's manner as he spoke the last names, and he came to the conclusion that his son fancied some girl, and he said to himself, "I am sure it is the merry little devil, for he spoke of her with a smile. Well, the merry little devil will be very welcome here, but I mustn't let Percy fancy so just at first."

Lady Langrishe remarked that her son never once mentioned Harold's name, and she wondered much thereat. She did not ask the cause of his silence, she waited for him to tell, but days went on, and he never spoke of Harold.

CHAPTER VII.

SIR CHARLES and his son got on very well together, not the least thing occurred to disturb the domestic harmony, although the baronet got a severe attack of gout; but, much to the surprise of all, for once he followed his doctor's advice, who invariably said to him, "There is nothing for you to do but to grin and bear it," and who in return was always instantly told by the baronet to go to a certain place which is hot, and where no one wants to go.

On this occasion when Dr. Franks said— "You must grin and bear it," he was surprised at not hearing the usual angry explosion for which he was prepared, and was rather puzzled at the baronet's unusual gentleness and patience, and, truth to tell, was somewhat concerned thereat, for he considered it a bad sign. It is not natural for a man with gout to be quiet, irritability and impatience help to wear the poison out of the system, and the more acute the attack, the more those around have to endure from the patient's temper. The baronet's own man

had a bad time of it, no doubt, but to Lady Langrishe and Percy he was patience personified, and from both he gained pity and sympathy.

When the first premonitory twinge occurred, Lady Langrishe got very anxious, for on former occasions, immediate hostilities began between her husband and son, and invariably the end was, that Percy went off and remained away for months.

She begged him to make allowance for his father's pain, and he promised he would do all he could to please him, and very much to her satisfaction she saw there was peace between them, and she even noticed signs of friendship, that never before had been evinced; they were certainly for once like father and son together; and in after-time Percy was glad of the few weeks of peace that had followed the many years of war.

Sir Charles always opened the post bag himself, and one day shortly after Percy's arrival home a letter came for him, the postmark was Athlone, and the writing was a lady's. The baronet smiled when he saw it, "Perhaps it is from the merry little devil," he thought.

Some weeks later another letter came, same postmark and same writing, and Sir Charles was more than pleased, for at last he thought Percy must mean something, for he hated letter-writing so much, that he would never take the trouble of writing to a girl, unless he was in love, and he must have answered the first letter, or the girl would not write again.

"I perceive you have got a lady correspondent in Ireland," said Sir Charles to his son, "I hope she is a nice girl."

"She is father! she is a very lovely girl."

"Then she is not the merry little devil," thought the baronet, and he could not help asking one more question, in an uneasy tone of voice.

"Has she got fair hair?"

"She has got dark eyes and hair, and is very lovely," was the reply.

The baronet looked at his son, he longed to ask yet another question, but he feared to do so, he was so afraid that a hint of his great desire for Percy's marriage, might frighten him, and send him off on another of his scampers on the Continent. Percy expected his father to make more inquiries, and

waited for a minute, but there was silence, so at last he said—

“I hope to introduce Miss O’Mahon to you some day, and I am sure you will admire her.”

“Do you mean, my son, that you are engaged?” asked the old gentleman in a quivering voice, with outstretched hand.

Never before, had he addressed Percy as “my son,” and the young man noticed his father’s emotion, but how could he guess the very great anxiety of his parent for his marriage?

“No father! I am not engaged, but I mean to return soon to Ireland, and then I hope to arrange matters.”

“Why not go at once?” asked Sir Charles eagerly.

“She is in the country at present, and I could not very well go to her home without an invitation, but she and her family are coming to the seaside, and I mean to meet them at Kingstown.”

“Do so my boy! and God bless you! and God bless your future wife!”

It was the first time that Percy ever heard his father call on the Almighty to bless his son, and he felt strangely moved. These

two had been almost strangers, but during these latter days the voice of nature had spoken.

"Thank you father!" said Percy, and he clasped the baronet's hand. "I am afraid we two have not understood each other, but now, and henceforth we are friends!"

"Yes! my son, friends always! friends until death!"

Percy could not trust himself to say more, somehow he felt that if he tried to speak the words would not come; so he pressed his father's hand once more in silence, and then he left him. In looking back on years gone past, he remembered with pain, the many altercations he had had with his father, and how often he had openly defied his authority; he felt sorry for what had passed, and although he was not altogether to blame, he deeply regretted the estrangement that had for so long existed between him and his parent, and resolved that he would try by his future conduct to compensate for his former want of filial duty. It is never too late to mend! No! never!

Percy's letter was from Eily, he had written to her from London, to inquire about the illness of her sister, and had heard in

reply that Maud was almost well again, her little feverish attack had passed off quickly.

Percy wrote again to Eily, he wanted to know when her family should be in Kingstown; a friend of his, who was going to do some mountain climbing in Switzerland, offered him his yacht for the month of August, and Percy intended to avail himself of the offer, if the O'Mahon family should be in Kingstown during that month.

Eily wrote in reply.

“ Wild Park,
“ Co. Roscommon.

“ DEAR MR. LANGRISHE,

“ According to present arrangements we go to Kingstown early in July, and will remain there until September first. I told Gerry about your friend's yacht, and the ‘boy’ is in a wild state of excitement, indeed it will be very pleasant, all of us are fond of sailing and we have a small yacht here.

“ Maud is quite well now thanks. Now, I must tell you a most wonderful piece of news. Just think we are to have a fancy ball in Athlone; and you can't imagine what a state we are in about it. The 16th has been

stationed here for ever so long, and the regiment leaves Athlone this summer, so the officers have decided to give a fancy cotton ball for their farewell. Cotton takes in such a lot of materials that very brilliant costumes can be made. We are much exercised in our minds as to what Maud is to wear. Major and Mrs. Greer, who are both very artistic, are determined she must wear something quite out of the common. The Major wants her to go as 'La Bella di Titiano,' and his wife is in favour of the 'Queen of Cyprus,' the dress to be copied from another of Titian's pictures. Mrs. Greer has a photograph of 'La Bella,' but I don't like the dress, and I think Maud handsomer, however the Greers say that if I saw the pictures, I should at once see the resemblance, and they insist that she is like both 'La Bella' and the 'Queen of Cyprus.' Mrs. Greer has written to Florence for coloured photos.

"I remember you told me you were there, perhaps you have seen the pictures, and perhaps you have coloured photos, oh! if you have, do please lend them to me.

"Nothing is decided about my dress yet, for my own part I have not got an inspiration above a Colleen Bawn or a flower girl.

"I know you are to be invited, and I do hope so much, that you will come, Captain Dare told me that he expected your cousin on a visit, and that he intended asking you to come also. The ball will take place early in June, date not fixed yet.

"I have written quite a long letter, but the ball is such an engrossing subject that I could write a lot more, but I really must not, so adieu, joined by mother in kind regards.

"Believe me,

"Yours very sincerely,

"EILEEN O'MAHON."

Percy had been in Florence, and he knew the two pictures well, he had been very much struck with them, and many and many a day he had gone from one to the other, to try and decide which face he liked the best, and he had never been able to make up his mind. He would spend half an hour, or more in the Venetian school, standing before the picture of the Queen of Cyprus, and he would fancy he liked her face best, and then he would scurry down the steep stairs, and hurry along the passages leading to the Pitti gallery. He would neither look to the right, nor the left, he would pass by the engravings,

the cartoons, the tapestries, everything, he might take a glance out at the mountains as he was crossing the Arno, but that was all, he would hurry along until he reached the hall of Venus, and there he would stand mute and absorbed before "La Bella di Titiano," and then in a little while he would decide that hers was the lovelier face. It might chance that before leaving, he would return to the "Uffizi" gallery, and if he did so, he would turn in again to take another passing glance at the Cyprian Queen, and then, he invariably again changed his mind in her favour. Whichever picture he saw last gained the day, but he never could decide finally between the two.

He read Eily's letter over twice, and smiled as he replaced it in the envelope.

"I can send them quite easily," he muttered, as he strolled along towards his mother's morning-room.

What a lovely little room it was, octagon in shape, with a large bay-window. The walls were painted a dull grey, with a wide border of tropical flowers and birds, the dado was a grey green, on the ceiling there was an Aurora. The hangings were of amber satin, and nearly all the furniture was covered to

correspond, but there were a few things different, just enough to relieve the eye ; and there was a soft velvety carpet of indescribable shades. In one corner there was a lovely little group in marble, a Cupid and Psyche, on the walls were suspended plates of valuable old china, here and there an etagère laden with specimens of Capo di Monte, Chelsea and other china, with an occasional tall, slender Venetian glass. There was a Florentine mosaic jardinière, an exquisite work of art, and there were flowers everywhere, flowers in every nook and corner, for Lady Langrishe loved to see herself surrounded with the gifts of Flora. Of course there was the inevitable clock—a Sèvres one—on the mantel-piece, and on the walls hung two pictures, they were copies of Titian's "Queen of Cyprus" and "La Bella." Percy had brought them home from Florence as a present to his mother.

Lady Langrishe was reading a magazine when her son entered, she put it aside as he approached her.

"Mother," he said, "I want you to lend me something."

"Lend you something, Percy !" she said, in a tone of surprise.

"I ought not to say something, I should have said two things."

"What are they, Percy?"

"These two pictures, they will come back to you quite safely."

Lady Langrishe smiled, she remembered what Percy had said to her when he presented the pictures.

"Find me a girl like either, mother! and on the spot I will lay my heart at her feet."

"Do you want to get them copied?" she asked.

"No! I want to lend them to a young lady, she wishes to see the dresses for a fancy ball; your pictures will be quite safe, mother."

"I will lend them with pleasure, but"—

"Thanks! I should like to send them off to-day."

"You can do so, but Percy, won't you tell your mother about this young lady?" and she looked at him pleadingly.

"She is Miss O'Mahon, of Wild Park, Roscommon."

"And does she want to dress as either?" asked Lady Langrishe, nodding her head towards the pictures.

"No, mother! her sister's costume is to be either."

"Then she must be a very lovely girl to think of going to a ball as 'La Bella.'"

"I hear she is very handsome," replied Percy, "but I have not seen her, I only know Miss O'Mahon, and she is lovely. I was speaking to my father about her this morning. I am going to Ireland again soon."

"Then you mean seriously, Percy?"

"Yes, mother!"

"Who are the O'Mahons?"

"A very old Irish family," he replied, "poor I believe, but that does not matter. Mrs. O'Mahon was a Miss Ferrers, of Old Court, Dorset, and her aunt who is unmarried is very rich, and has promised to fortune the girls, so Eily will not be a dowerless bride. I have been told the Ferrers are a good family."

"Yes!" replied Lady Langrishe, "I often heard your uncle talk of them. George Detmar said his first calf love was Elinor Ferrers, of Old Court, but that was years before he met your aunt. I suppose the old lady you allude to is the very Elinor, I know she never married. I remember meeting her once or twice, but by the bye, Percy, how is

it I never hear you speak of Harold now, and I don't see any letters coming from him?"

Percy winced at this question, he felt he was to blame in having had an open rupture with his cousin, and he knew it would grieve his mother sorely to hear of it, yet with all his faults he was truthful; he would much rather have been silent, but as Lady Langrishe had asked the question, there was no help but to reply.

"Harold and I have had a little difference."

"How is that, Percy? how could you quarrel with Harold? he has been like a brother to you."

"Brothers often quarrel," muttered Percy.

"Yes, often! but still you and he seemed all in all to each other, I cannot understand how there could be a coolness between you two. Tell me about it, Percy, say it is only some little thing that will not signify."

"I don't know about that, mother. I'm afraid Harold and I can never be friends again."

"Never friends again! impossible!" Lady Langrishe looked aghast, she couldn't believe that Percy and Harold were *brouillis*; but then she didn't know that a girl's fair face had come between them.

"He interfered," said Percy, "and of course I couldn't stand that."

"What do you mean?" asked Lady Langrishe.

"He interfered about this girl, about Miss O'Mahon. From the very beginning I went in for her, and then he tried for her too."

"Then you are rivals!" gasped his mother; in an instant she understood the full position. The two young men had the same taste, so naturally the same face would attract both; and then if both tried for the same girl, there could be only one result, of course the years of love and friendship would be forgotten.

"Yes mother, we are rivals, but Harold will get over his disappointment when things are settled. I would rather not have quarrelled with him, but I couldn't help it, indeed I couldn't!"

"Probably not! but are you sure the girl likes you?" anxiously inquired his mother.

"Yes! I feel pretty sure, you see she writes to me, I have no doubt about her answer."

"Girls now-a-day are very mercenary, and are all looking out for a good settlement, so take care my boy, that some such motive may not exist in this case."

"But I know she likes me!" in a dogged voice.

"Then I am sorry for poor Harold."

"I am sorry too, mother! but it can't be helped, he would interfere."

"I wonder, if I were to write to him, and"—

"No! please don't!" interrupted Percy, "it is much better to leave things alone, you couldn't make us friends again."

"Perhaps not! but Molière says, '*Cinq ou six coups de bâton entre gens qui s'aiment ne font que ragaillardir l'amitié*', so I trust that you and he may be friends again. Now Percy! I want you to promise me, that you will say or do nothing that will widen the breach between you."

"How can I promise, mother? I want to win the girl! I won't give her up for anybody!" in a fierce tone.

"I am not asking you, Percy, only don't be too triumphant in your manner towards Harold, and one question more, you know your father's craze; is the girl fair?"

"No mother! she has black wavy hair and dark blue eyes; her complexion is delicately fair."

"And this sister?"

"I have not seen her, but she is said to

resemble ‘La Bella di Titiano,’ ” answered Percy, “ all her family rave about her.”

“ I should have thought she would have been more in your style,” and again Lady Langrishe thought of what Percy said when he gave her the pictures.

“ Well you see, I changed my mind when I saw Eily. Look here mother ! if Aunt Fanny doesn’t know about Harold and me, please don’t say anything about our quarrel ! pray don’t ! will you promise ? ” and the handsome young fellow looked pleadingly at his mother.

“ Rely on me, Percy ! I’ll say nothing, for it would grieve her too sorely.”

Percy unfastened the pictures from the wall, and got them removed to his room.

Lady Langrishe remained in a brown study for a long time, and the result of her reflection was to doubt if Percy was really serious, but she resolved to keep her opinion to herself. Time would tell, and if she were right in her surmise, Harold and Percy would be friends once more.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE pictures were carefully packed and despatched to Wild Park, and in due time a letter arrived from Eily. She was most grateful for the loan of the pictures. There had been a grand debate, and Maud's dress was settled on, but it was a secret, nor could she tell about her own dress either, although that too was decided. All she could tell was that Gerry was to be a Venetian artist, and her father a British tar. He had flatly refused to sacrifice his whiskers, so an artistic costume was out of the question for him. She concluded her letter by hoping to see Percy at the ball, and begging of him to be sure to come.

By the same post another letter arrived. It ran as follows :—

“ Athlone Barrack.

“ DEAR PERCY,

“ Harold invited himself for a few days' visit a little while ago, but I had to put him off as I was about visiting in Limerick;

besides, I wanted both of you to come to our fancy ball, which takes place June 5th, so I am writing to him to-day to ask him to come on the 4th and stay for a fortnight, and I want you to come same day and for same time. I cannot have you longer as then I get my leave. I know Harold could not get on without his Fidus Achates, so I hope you will be able to manage it, although it is a long way to ask a fellow to come. The costume you have will do, although it is not a cotton one. Don't hesitate to wear it. Do turn up, we mean to do the thing well.

"I hope Sir Charles and Lady Langrishe are well. Remember me to them, and hoping to see you on the 4th prox.

"Yours very sincerely,

"EDWARD DARE."

Of course Percy wrote accepting the invitation. He had a very handsome and becoming fancy dress, a complete costume of a "Suisse" of the Pope's Guard, and the black, red, and yellow uniform had proved most effective on the occasions that he had worn it; but he determined to get a new dress, and as he wanted to identify himself with the Wild Park family, he wrote to his

costumier to make him a handsome Venetian costume of the 16th century.

He told Sir Charles about his invitation to Athlone. The baronet was very pleased, and got quite fussy towards the time for his son's departure, and when Percy went to say good-bye he said—

"God bless you, Percy! You have my best wishes for your success. You'll let me know at once when anything is decided, won't you?"

"Oh! certainly, father, and now good-bye! I hope you'll be quite strong when I return."

Sir Charles was still doing the invalid although he came down to dinner every day, and had been out driving; but he generally remained in his room until the afternoon. He was robed in a cashmere dressing gown, and wore a long white nightcap which gave him a weird-like appearance; an ugly, old man looks hideous in a nightcap, for there is no more unbecoming head-gear.

Percy had scarcely closed the door after him when a sudden thought seemed to inspire the baronet, and he jumped from his chair and hobbled over to the window, which he tapped violently, then raised it, and shouted out—

"Telegraph, Percy! telegraph; telegraph! and the sooner the better."

Percy looked up at his father. It was as much as he could do not to laugh, for the baronet's appearance and gesticulations were absurdly ridiculous, and for a moment he couldn't think what he was to telegraph about. But his father did not leave him long in doubt.

"You know what I mean, Percy! Telegraph as soon as you settle about—about that filly in Athlone!" and he laid stress on the word "filly."

Sir Charles spoke thus ambiguously as there were several servants about and he did not want them to know that his son was going courting.

Percy burst into a hearty fit of laughter (how could he help doing so?) jumped into his trap, and in a moment was off; as long as he could see his father his gesticulations meant, "Telegraph! telegraph!"

Percy had previously taken leave of his mother. She, too expressed her best wishes for his success, but at the same time gave him a little lecture about his conduct towards his cousin, and begged him to try and make peace with Harold. She asked him to

promise to do so, or at least to promise to make an advance.

Percy was very unwilling to comply with his mother's request. "He didn't want to be fettered" he said. But Lady Langrishe importuned him so much that at last he gave a very reluctant promise to make a friendly advance to Harold, and so he left his home accompanied by the good wishes of his parents.

Lady Langrishe thought a good deal about the matter. She knew her son well, and now that he had gained his father's consent to his marriage with Eily, she was afraid lest Percy should cool off; indeed she almost felt sure he would. If Sir Charles had put the least obstacle in his way he would have been in a fever to surmount it; but as everything seemed such plain sailing she doubted whether it ever come to anything. The only thing that would tempt Percy to go on was the rivalry with his cousin, and for that she was truly sorry; but still she hoped for the best, for she also was anxious to see Percy married. But she played her cards better than Sir Charles, for her son left her with the idea that a daughter-in-law would not meet with a very warm welcome from his

mother. "But no matter," he thought, "the governor will make up for her."

He reached Dublin in due time. Next day he went early to the Broadstone Terminus and secured a comfortable corner seat for himself. Shortly afterwards the Fowler girls appeared. They were very fussy, and in a great state of excitement. With them was a young fellow whom Percy remembered having seen often, also a schoolgirl evidently his sister.

"Oh! Mr. Langrishe, how delightful to meet you!" exclaimed Ella. "You're going to the ball too, of course! How charming! Have you got a seat? Let us all go together. Your cousin will be here presently, and we must secure a seat for him."

Here was a dilemma!

Harold might arrive any moment, and Percy had not quite made up his mind how to make the advance that he had promised his mother he would make. If he could only get off to a carriage by himself he would think about it; but before all the others he didn't know what to do, nor could he guess how Harold might receive his advance. But he didn't get the opportunity of going alone, for Ida Fowler rushed off to the carriage

where he had already taken his seat, and took possession *in toto*. One old gentleman who wanted to intrude got well snubbed for his pains, and went away grumbling about the cheeky manners of the girls of the period, and wondering what the next generation will be like.

Percy went out to the ticket office and there saw Harold, who looked pale and worn, but at the same time he had a stern, fixed, determined expression which was new to him. It struck Percy that his cousin was ill. He went towards him at once, and in a hesitating voice said—

“As we are going to the same place let us try and appear friendly. I wouldn’t like the fellows to know.”

“Nor should I,” replied Harold. “So say no more, but let us forget our quarrel,” and he turned to a porter to whom he gave a hamper in charge, with a thousand cautions about the safety of the contents.

So a peace was patched up between the cousins, and they took their seats in the carriage with the Misses Fowler, Mr. Evans, and his simpering sister.

Percy sat opposite to Ella Fowler, who

told him in a whisper that Ida was engaged to Mr. Evans, and that they were going to visit his parents, who lived at Athlone. Percy further learnt that Mrs. Fowler did not approve of the intended marriage, for the young couple were to start for New Zealand where Mr. Evans had just got an appointment in the University.

"Of course," went on Ella, "it is very hard lines for me to be left alone. I don't know whatever I shall do!"

"Get married too!" suggested Percy.

"That's easier said than done! I'm unlucky! 'I never loved,' *et cetera, et cetera*. You know Moore's lines so I needn't quote them. Heigh! ho! how I wish Gerty and Rorke got me either way! I don't much mind which way!"

(Gerty and Rorke are job carriage proprietors. Many and many a bride have they sent to the altar, and many and many a corpse have they borne to God's acre.)

"Look here!" continued Ella, in a whisper, "Evan's is frightfully jealous! Do flirt with Ida a bit, and if they had a row it might be broken off! I asked your cousin, but he flatly refused, and he said

he would warn Ida, which I consider downright mean of him. But oh dear! How I wish Gerty and Rorke got an order for me either way!"

The lovers were *vis-à-vis* in the far corner, and seemed to be quite taken up with each other.

Miss Evans was buried in a novel (supremest bliss to schoolgirls) and Harold had a lot of papers, which, at all events, he appeared to read. Percy stole a glance at him now and again and noticed how stern and resolved his cousin looked.

After a while the conversation became general, and on the whole they were a very merry party and on very good terms with each other when the train reached Athlone, where they separated.

Harold and Percy were met by Captain Dare who drove them to the barracks, where they met with a cordial welcome from several other officers.

Harold brought with him the mysterious hamper about which he seemed so particular, and Percy was rather curious to know what it contained. On reaching the barracks Harold opened the hamper, and in it was a

dear little pug, which he said he brought down to Miss O'Mahon, and would like to send it to her at once.

"Give me the doggie," said Major Greer, "my wife and I are going over to Wild Park, and we'll take it to her."

Accordingly master puggie was restored to his basket and given into the Major's charge.

"How confoundedly stupid of me!" muttered Percy to himself. "I heard her admire the pugs at the dog show. I wonder it never struck me to get her one," and for the rest of the evening he was inclined to sulk.

There was a large gathering of red-coats that night in Athlone, for a great number came from all quarters for the ball, which was the chief topic of conversation.

When Major Greer returned he told Harold that Miss O'Mahon was delighted with the pug, and she sent a thousand messages as well as a little note of thanks.

It was the first she had written to Harold, and he wished he might give her a dog every day if he should get a letter in return.

CHAPTER IX.

ABOUT ten o'clock the guests began to arrive. First came Jeannette and Jeanot, a nun and a clown, then followed gipsy girls, Spanish duennas, Watteau, Venetian, Louis XV., Louis XVI., Turkish, Chinese and Japanese costumes, and very many quite indescribable.

Harold Detmar was a Spanish matador, and was a little disgusted at finding Miss Ella Fowler attired as Carmen. She immediately invited him to walk about with her, "as our dresses correspond," she said. Of course he couldn't refuse, although he was anxiously watching for the arrival of the O'Mahon family.

Percy's Venetian costume was a success, and suited him to perfection. He never looked better. Captain Dare also wore a Venetian dress.

Ida Fowler represented the *drapeau français*. It was a dress she had worn at a fancy ball at Nice, where it had been duly appreciated, but the tricolour was out of place in

Athlone; indeed, there were many there who didn't understand what it meant. Her *fiancé* was a Zouave, so of course, it was naturally his duty to take care of the French flag, which he accordingly did, and no one asked to interfere with him, so there was no danger of the international peace being disturbed.

Major and Mrs. Greer were the Earl of Leicester and Queen Elizabeth. Captain and Mrs. Howard, Hamlet and Ophelia, and very well they all looked.

Colonel Gray was in his uniform; he flatly refused to put on any strange toggery—he was too old for that kind of thing, he said—although everybody else said he wasn't. His wife looked charming, as a lady of a hundred years ago, and their two daughters were Giroflé and Girofia.

Suddenly there was a buzz outside and round the door, for there the people crowded. Some new arrival was creating a sensation, Harold's heart beat furiously, she was coming, he thought, but no; Mr. and Mrs. Bond, dressed as Robinson Crusoe and Mother Hubbard, were the arrivals. Their costumes created quite a diversion, more especially as they came with their parrot and dog.

Soon after there was another buzz, and

this time a jolly, good-humoured-looking sailor of H.M.S. Pinafore enters, Mr. O'Mahon and with him his wife in a handsome *poudrée* costume. She wore some splendid diamonds which caused universal admiration ; they were hired, of course, said many ; later it was heard they were a gift from her rich aunt, Miss Ferrers, who had also given the girls their costumes.

Behind Mr. and Mrs. O'Mahon came Mr. Martin as a doge of Venice ; and right well he looked, he suited the dress, and the dress suited him.

There was no sign of Eily, but Harold heard Mrs. O'Mahon tell Colonel Gray—

“The girls are following, and will be here directly.”

A few minutes later there is another buzz, and on every side there are exclamations, “Oh, how lovely !” and from the strangers, “Who is she ? Who are they ?”

Gerry O'Mahon and his two sisters entered, the young fellow was dressed as a Venetian artist ; he arrived palette and maul-stick in hand. Eily was Amy Robsart, and a more lovely Amy could scarcely be imagined. But the hum of approval was not for the young artist or the fair Amy. No ; all eyes were

turned on the third figure. She came in with the stately bearing of a queen, and her appearance so impressed the by-standers, who were crowding about the door, that they drew aside to let her pass.

Maud O'Mahon was dressed as Catherine Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus, and she looked in very truth a queen.

Reader, did you ever see Titian's picture of Catherine Cornaro in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence? If you did, you know how Maud looked, only that she had the advantage of youth; Titian's picture represents a woman past thirty, but looking at it, no one can doubt that the Queen of Cyprus was one of the loveliest women of her time.

Percy was spell-bound, he saw neither Eily nor her brother. "The very picture has come to life," he murmured.

But there are many who have not seen the great painter's work, so it is best to say what Maud was like, although word-painting could never do her justice.

Maud O'Mahon was above medium height, and her figure was exquisitely moulded. Oval face, with delicate pink and creamy-white complexion, straight nose, small mouth, brown eyes with lovely long lashes and

arched eyebrows. Then her hair—such hair! just the colour that artists love to paint, a rich golden auburn, without the slightest tinge of red, and it was of extreme luxuriance. Her carriage was like that of other members of her family, there was a certain stately grace in all her movements, which gave her an air of regal dignity.

Her dress was copied exactly from Titian's picture ; it was made of emerald green velvet, embroidered with gold ; the front of bodice and skirt was of rich plum-colour sateen, fastened with round pearl buttons. At the edge of the green velvet there was a border of brown embroidered with gold and pearls. Gold crown set with precious stones, and with a large pearl surmounting each point, and in the front a kind of Eastern-looking aigrette of precious stones. Long white muslin veil streaming behind, drop pearl earrings, ruby brooch and bracelets completed the costume. Her hair was dressed in tiny curls all round her forehead, behind it was fastened in a long loose plait.

Every detail was correct, and Maud O'Mahon made a perfect representative of Catherine Cornaro, "the daughter of St. Mark," and Queen of Cyprus.

A quadrille was immediately formed. Amy Robsart danced with the Earl of Leicester, their *vis-à-vis* Carmen and her Spanish matador, the Queen of Cyprus danced with the Doge of Venice.

Percy stood among the crowd, his eyes followed every movement of the fair young queen, he saw her and only her; the quadrille ended and still he gazed, but he was only doing the same as every one else, for all were lost in admiration of the Cyprian Queen.

"Do you mean to cut me, Mr. Langrishe?" asked Eily, "I bowed to you twice."

"I beg your pardon! I am very sorry! but I was looking at your sister."

"Come, I'll introduce you. Who are you supposed to be?"

"I don't know who I am," replied Percy, "I only know I am a Venetian."

"Well, no matter, come!" And they approached her sister, who was surrounded by admirers.

"I want to present a Venetian Signor to the Queen of Cyprus," said Eily, with a gay laugh.

Maud bowed, smiled, and looked extremely puzzled, but her sister did not leave her long in doubt, for she added—

"Mr. Langrishe—my sister."

"Oh! I am so pleased to meet you," cried Maud, "I have heard so much about you that I look upon you quite like a friend, and I want to thank you for lending the pictures."

"I am very glad they were of use," said Percy. "May I have the pleasure of a dance?"

As Eily had been queen of her first ball a short time previously, so was Maud queen now. There was not a second opinion on the subject, and Major and Mrs. Greer were very pleased that their idea turned out such a success; still the Major was not quite sure but that she would have looked better as "La Bella di Titiano."

"Nonsense!" said his wife, "she could not look better, for she is perfect, and there can be nothing better than perfection."

The ball was a brilliant success, and every one enjoyed it. Harold was supremely happy. Eily's eyes had lighted up when she saw him, and she seemed so glad to meet him again, and then Percy did not interfere, he danced once only with Eily.

Mr. Martin did not valse, and during one he saw Ella Fowler sitting alone and looking:

rather disconsolate, so he went and took a seat beside her.

"How is it you are not dancing?" he asked.

"To tell you the truth my shoe pinches, and it is agony to stir. Oh, nothing will ever tempt me to wear a short skirt again!" she replied with a pathetic sigh.

"Your dress is very pretty, but it is a pity you cannot enjoy yourself."

"But I was enjoying myself very much indeed. Guess how."

"I am afraid it would be useless trying to guess, but it is amusing to watch this motley crowd."

"Well, I was arranging in my mind's eye *tableaux vivants*," replied Ella.

"*Tableaux vivants!*" exclaimed Mr. Martin, "how strange! I was just thinking of the same thing a little while ago, and was wishing I could have a party at my house. It seems a pity not to use these dresses again before they are all packed away for the moths to eat."

"Oh, do have a party, Mr. Martin. Don't you remember the *tableaux* at the Vivians?"

"Yes, I remember perfectly. I have a

much better room for that sort of thing. I say Greer, come here for a moment."

The Major, who was standing near, came and joined them.

"What do you say to getting up some *tableaux vivants*?" asked Mr. Martin.

"Say? Why this: that I was just wishing I could imbue some one with the idea," replied the Major.

"Well, Miss Fowler has imbued me, so we'll look upon the party as a settled thing. I'll leave you with her to talk the matter over, while I go ask Mrs. O'Mahon to do hostess, and mind!" and he placed his finger significantly on his lips.

"Certainly! We'll keep it dark," exclaimed Ella and her companion.

Major Greer went and fetched his wife, and they, along with Ella Fowler talked over the costumes and the groups that could be arranged.

In the meanwhile Mr. Martin sought Mrs. O'Mahon, and imparted to her his wish to give an entertainment, which should begin with *tableaux vivants* and conclude with a dance, and he begged her to act as hostess.

"With pleasure," she replied, "but ought

you not to wait until your daughter comes home?"

Mr. Martin frowned, and at that moment he looked as evil as any man could look.

"I can give another when she comes, but she would be out of place as hostess, she is much too young."

Mrs. O'Mahon said nothing more about his daughter, but thought that as well as she could remember the girl was seventeen at the very least.

"Of course your daughters will take part in the *tableaux*?" said Mr. Martin.

"I have no objection if they wish to do so," replied Mrs. O'Mahon; "but I should not be surprised if Maud would have some idea or other about it, and if she objects to take part, of course Eily will also."

"But you mustn't let her object," said he in an impatient tone.

"I can't prevent her," was the reply. "If she takes an idea into her head she manages to persuade everybody that hers is the right view of the case. I find there is not the least use in arguing with her, for she invariably gets the best of it in the end; so if you want her for your *tableaux* you must ask her your-

self, and tell her that I have promised to preside for you."

Mr. Martin did not at all like to be obliged to request the young lady's co-operation. He thought he was doing enough in providing the entertainment, and that the others ought to be delighted to carry out his project. Still, Maud was queen of the ball, and unless she and her sister consented to take part in the *tableaux* he would hardly care to get them up. So accordingly he made his way to where Maud was sitting out a dance. There had been some mistake about the engagement, so to settle the dispute she refused to dance with either of the claimants for her hand.

"What do you say to another dance next week, young queen?" asked Mr. Martin.

"Say!" she replied. "Why, it will be most charming! Where is it to be?"

"Come and take a turn round the rooms and I'll tell you all about it."

Maud arose, and with a few words of apology to her two disconsolate partners, and promising them a dance each next time, she accepted Mr. Martin's arm and went with him.

They walked up and down, in and out, and many a frown contracted his brow. He tried

in vain again and again to alter the girl's decision, but it was of no use arguing with her, and at last he was fairly beaten at all points, and had to give in just as Maud's partner came to claim her, so he said—

"Well, I consent, but very much against my will. I'll telegraph first thing in the morning."

"I don't in the least mind whether you consent or not," she replied. "But as you have never entertained young ladies before, it is only right that the first time you invite them to your house that your daughter should be there to receive them."

Mr. Martin went back to Mrs. O'Mahon, and told her the result of his interview with Maud.

"She would not hear of her mother doing hostess," he said. "She wouldn't countenance such a thing as her mother usurping anybody's place. She hadn't the least objection to taking part in the *tableaux*, but she and Eily would not go to his house until Miss Martin was there to receive them."

He told Mrs. O'Mahon he did all he could to persuade Maud to alter her decision, but in vain. "She beat me on all points," he said; "and I'll admit to you she had right on her side, for I suppose my daughter ought

to be at home, but I didn't want to bring her yet a while. However, I must telegraph for her in the morning."

Mrs. O'Mahon knew very well that Maud would object to her acting as hostess at Mr. Martin's entertainment, for already the girl had spoken to her mother about the very frequent visits of that gentleman, and said "She considered it extremely mean of her mother to be so friendly with a man who had it in his power to make them beggars, and she thought it mean of him to intrude where he must know he was not welcome."

"You are wrong, Maud," replied her mother on that occasion. "He is quite welcome to come to Wild Park whenever he likes. Eily and I are always pleased to see him. He was very kind to us in town, and I request you will remember that, and not be rude to him."

Maud said nothing more on the subject, but always treated Mr. Martin with a certain amount of hauteur which Eily noticed, and tried by her manner to compensate for her sister's coldness.

The night wore on, dance followed dance, and then came supper. The hours passed too quickly, but alas ! is it not always so ?

The happiest hours are surely the shortest, when one is engaged pleasantly the minutes fly too fleetly, and how short the hour is. The sixty minutes go almost like a flash of lightning, they begin, and they are gone before we can realize that one more hour has passed through the "glass of time," but then, on the other hand, there is sometimes an hour, perhaps, of pain or anxiety that seems an age; every one of the sixty minutes counts as an hour, but even it comes to an end, and is reckoned as past.

The fancy ball came to an end, it was a thing of the past, but all there thought the time too short, even although good-nights were not said until a deep red glow in the eastern horizon warned the revellers that King Sol was about to appear, and so the guests departed on their different routes homeward, and as they sank their weary heads on their pillows in search of slumber the world awoke. The sun appeared, and at the "magic of his ray" every copse and dell started into life. "Small birds making sweet melodie," and the song of the lark and the thrush broke the silence of the early morn, while the hum of insect life played a subdued accompaniment.

CHAPTER X.

"WELL, I think it was a success, and no mistake, everybody had a real good time, as the Yankees say," remarked Captain Dare, as he lazily puffed his cigar the morning after the ball.

"It went off very well indeed," said Major Greer, "and I feel very proud of the success of my beautiful Queen Catherine."

"Why, man, had you ever a doubt of her success?" asked Dare.

"Can't say that I had; but still she surprised me."

"I prefer Miss O'Mahon," remarked a youthful sub. "I think her the prettier, and she is certainly more amiable."

"Did the queen snub you, my boy?" asked the Major.

"No, sir, she did not, she danced with me, but I can't understand her—she knows too much. I don't like girls who know a lot; and she gave me a regular lecture by Jove! on idleness, as if I hadn't enough to do!" with a pathetic sigh.

Reader did you ever meet a man who had next to nothing to do, but who moaned and groaned over the amount of his labour, and who didn't think himself the hardest worked man in creation? Doing nothing is very trying, but doing a little is worse.

"I believe I like Miss O'Mahon best too," said Captain Dare.

"I don't think there can be a comparison drawn between the sisters," remarked Major Greer, "the elder is like the clear morning light, while the other is like the full blaze of noon, and"—

"By Jove! the Major is getting poetic," interrupted the sub. "I think it is clearly some one's duty to tell his wife to look after him."

"All right my boy," answered the Major, with a grin; "but you just try it on, and see what you'll get for your pains. Ah! here comes our clever phrenologist; we must hear what he has to say about the beauties. Now, Moran, tell us what you think about the O'Mahon sisters."

Dr. Moran carefully disposed his fat person on a comfortable couch before replying.

"Well! I think Miss O'Mahon a most

charming girl, and very lovely, and I think her sister is a queen of beauty."

"There now!" said Major Greer, in a triumphant tone, "what do you two say about the beauties?" he demanded, as Harold and Percy entered together.

They both hesitated about answering for a second, then Harold declared in favour of Eily, while his cousin said he thought Maud perfection.

"You're about right," remarked Dr. Moran. "I saw a few lines in that book you lent me, Greer (the life of Titian, I mean) that can just be applied to Miss Maud. Titian in speaking of the beauty of Lavinia, the physician Parma's daughter, said, 'She is a very queen amongst them all ; her beauty is regal, her face is perfect ; and the expression of supreme command would be divine, but that there is a sign of consciousness about her which imparts a touch of earthly vanity.' Miss Maud is conscious of her beauty—very conscious of it—and there is the flaw."

"I don't think it's a flaw," said Percy.

"But it is, and a very great one," rejoined Moran ; "nothing spoils a beautiful woman more, and"—

"Miss Maud isn't a bit vain," interrupted

Major Greer ; "I think she is a good, tractable girl."

"Tractable girl, indeed !" laughed Moran. "My dear fellow, if you had proposed that her dress should have been that of a charity girl, you would soon have found out about her tractability."

"Come, now, phrenologist, give us your opinion," said Dare ; "tell us all you know about them."

"Yes, do !" echoed the others.

"I don't know anything about them ; I only think."

"Well, say what you think."

Dr. Moran had the reputation of being able to read character, and some people even thought he could forecast the future ; at all events, some of his guesses turned out wonderfully correct.

"I think Miss O'Mahon a very lovely, charming girl," he said ; "she is exceedingly amiable, and is ready to sacrifice her wishes for the pleasure of others. She will love once, and only once ; she will give her heart without the least reservation ; she is one of those who think 'the world well lost for love,' and if her love dream is fulfilled, she will make some fortunate man a good wife ;

and she will be the happy mother of his children ; but if, on the other hand, that she loves in vain, and meets with a disappointment, then"—and he paused.

Harold Detmar had been listening intently to every word, and he wondered if her heart were his ; was he to be the one love of her life ?

"Then, what ? go on !" cried Dare.

"Then she will die !" said Dr. Moran, in a solemn tone, "she will fade away like a summer flower, nipped by the first keen breath of autumn wind. A disappointment will kill her as surely as if a dagger were thrust into her heart."

Harold turned aside and looked out of the window. What a prediction ! what a terrible future ! but it was all rubbish, he wouldn't believe it. Eily would have a happy life.

"Let us hope she won't be disappointed," remarked the sub. ; "it would be a pity for her to go to an early grave. Now tell us about her sister."

"The young queen is a beauty, she knows it, and she means to have a glorious reign if the fates permit. She is endowed with great talent, which has been carefully fostered by some one whose acquaintance I have not had

the pleasure of making in this benighted place. She has the gift of command ; if she were a man she would make a good general. Her ambition is immense ; if she marries a man who is at all clever and ambitious, she will be a good wife, for she will be truly a helpmate. If her husband has no ambition, she will push him, pull him, and worry him uphill ; she will not be satisfied with mediocrity. The most suitable match for her would be a hard-working, aspiring young barrister, endowed with a certain amount of talent ; and, if I'm not very mistaken, his wife would help him on until he reached the top of the ladder. She is capable of marrying for wealth, and position, not that I say she will do so, and in that case I shouldn't care to be her husband. To sum up, Miss Maud is very handsome, very clever, very ambitious, and she will rule everybody, young and old, gentle and simple, with whom she comes in contact."

" You're right there, by Jove ! " said Greer, " she rules everybody at Wild Park ; father, mother, servants, every one ; and last night she had a set-to with Martin, and, by Jove ! if he wasn't in a rage, he was almost white with passion."

"What about?" from all sides.

"He wants to give a ball or some such affair, and to have *tableaux vivants*, and the chit as he called her, would neither go nor take part, unless he brought his daughter home, and he had to promise to telegraph for her this morning. It appears the girl is quite grown up, but for some reason he wants to keep her at school."

"Then we're to have the ball, and the *tableaux*," said the youthful sub.

"Yes! it is all settled, and I want some of you fellows to help."

"Of course we'll help," from a chorus,
"when is the affair to be?"

"Very soon! I'll want you my boy," to the sub. who grinned from ear to ear, "you're to appear in your wonderful Chinese dress; we want your help Dare, also that of your two friends."

"You must excuse me," said Harold, "I have never taken part in *tableaux*, and I might spoil the whole affair."

"Nonsense man! You really must, if it were only to oblige Miss Fowler, for she started the idea, and she means to appear with you."

Harold's face was a study.

"With me!" he gasped.

"Yes!" replied Greer, "Carmen and her lover!"

"Her lover!"

"Yes! why not? Can't you oblige the girl? perhaps she'll paint up a bit, at all events she doesn't look so yellow by candle-light."

"I won't appear with her or any one else," said Harold, in a very determined voice, "I'll lend my dress to anybody."

"That won't do at all, Detmar. Miss Fowler wants you and nobody else. We're to go out to Wild Park this afternoon to arrange things, so you fellows turn up there. I can give one of you a seat. Will you come Detmar?"

"Thanks, yes! but you understand I won't take part."

"I don't understand anything of the kind, you'll have to say no! to Miss Fowler yourself. I must go to see at what hour my missis will be ready to start."

The others continued their chat, they talked of everybody, of their dresses, their manners, their private history, and in fact thoroughly discussed the guests of the previous evening. They wondered if certain

lords of the creation awoke that morning with headaches, and they also wondered how some dowagers, who seemed to have no regard for their digestions, felt, and they talked about the girls. They wondered how much *dot* Miss So-and-so would have, and if it were true that the fortune of Miss Lachose was even more than had been hinted. Of course the O'Mahon girls would not have a penny, the news of their expectations from Miss Ferrers had not reached Athlone.

After a while Major Greer reappeared with a letter in his hand.

"After all Detmar," he said, "you won't have to say no ! to Miss Fowler, for she cries off ! Here's a note from her, she says Carmen and her lover would be neither historical or æsthetical, but in any case she would have to give up, for she says she could not attempt to wear her shoes again, and that she has thought of something else; so you've escaped."

"Thank goodness !" muttered Harold.

"Come to my quarters, Detmar, at three o'clock, and you other fellows find your way to Wild Park by four. There's a nice breeze you could sail over ! "

"Let us sail by all means !" from a chorus,

“let us go in the ‘Flirt,’ it is just the day for it ! ”

And it was just the day for a sail, a lovely, early summer day, alas ! such a one as comes seldom to poor Erin, where showers are more frequent than sunshine, but then when there is a bright day how lovely everything looks ! The foliage is unspoiled by dust, and where is grass as green as in the Emerald Isle ?

CHAPTER XI.

Il y coule des eaux charmantes,
L'iris y naît dans les roseaux,
Et le murmure des amantes
S'y mêle au babil des oiseaux.

THE Shannon is a very fine river, and just above Athlone it widens, and forms quite a large lake, called Lough Ree, which in parts is about eight miles in width. Numerous small islets raise their green banks above the rippling water, and then there is Carberry, a lovely little island, which is a very favourite resort for picnic parties.

The surface of the lake is always in motion, the water is never still, and sometimes it is hard to believe that it is not the sea, for occasionally it wears all the same characteristics. There are days when sailing on Lough Ree is a thing of danger, when big foam-crested waves rush after one another, and break on the pebbly strand.

All round the lough there are handsome residences, and perhaps the most beautifully picturesque of all is Wild Park.

The avenue leading to the house is very long, bordered on each side by splendid trees;

as one approaches there is not even a glimpse of the lake, until quite close to the house; then the wide expanse of water suddenly bursts on the view, and how beautiful that unexpected panorama is, and how lovely it looks when the sky is blue and unclouded!

Carberry and the little islets rising out of the dancing wavelets, and the shore undulates and varies at every step, here and there a long strip of land stretches out into the lake, and in some parts the scenery is extremely wild, and very picturesque.

The trees at Wild Park are splendid, there are fine elms, enormous beeches, and giant horse chestnuts, which in the months of May and June are laden with blossom. Hedges of hawthorn, intermingled with the dog rose and woodbine, divide the green fields. Then there are banks where oxlips and the nodding violet grow, dells where the faint odour of the iris and sweet meadow perfumes the air, groves with a mossy verdure studded with the pale primrose and golden jonquil, and everywhere ferns growing in the wildest luxuriance.

The house stands at a short distance from the water's edge, it is a long building, one end being two-story high, while the re-

mainder is three. The front is like a sheet of ivy, while the gable wall, which is exposed to the full sun is covered with myrtle, roses, clematis, while the Virginian vine stretches up to the very roof. Behind the house there is a large garden, a real old-fashioned garden, where all kinds of flowers come after one another, in their due season, for the bedding-out plan is not followed except in a very small way. Mr. O'Mahon objects to it, the garden is his hobby, and if he has not succeeded in being master in his house, he certainly has managed to rule paramount in the garden; and there he allows no new-fangled notions to interfere with his ideas. There are just a few beds of irregular form which he gives over to Mrs. O'Mahon and her satellites when his tulips have been taken up and stored, and then she has them made gaudy with scarlet geraniums, calceolarias, and other plants, to which the slaves of the bedding-out plan are devoted.

Mr. O'Mahon loves his flowers, and his garden is perfection; at no time of the year could one enter, without being able to bear away at least a few blooms. In the winter, the Christmas rose, followed shortly by the snowdrop and crocus, then come in their

turn violets, hyacinths, the polyanthus and from that time there is no lack of flowers, and when June arrives the whole wealth of the floral world seems to be blooming together in the garden of Wild Park; still there as everywhere else the rose is queen of all.

Mr. O'Mahon's roses were magnificent, he had standards, dwarfs, climbers, every kind in fact, and they grew to perfection; he devoted himself to the culture of roses, and they well repaid his care, for he could show a selection that would cause envy to enter the heart of many a professional rose grower.

Before the hall door there is a broad sweep of gravel, and then the soft green sward which is dotted over with narcissi, slopes down to the lake. There is a tennis court and croquet lawn with well-rolled turf, and then out in the water, dancing on the tiny wavelets which break on the strand with a gentle splash, is the "Lurline," a pretty yacht, in which Gerald and his sisters pass many hours; there is a good strong row boat partly dragged out of the water, and there is also a canoe lying on the beach. Under one of the large chestnut trees, there is a table laden with all the requisites for

afternoon tea, and under a neighbouring tree there is a large garden seat, surrounded by stools, chairs, and cushions.

Gerry is stretched full length on the green turf, he is enjoying life as he likes to enjoy it ! He says life is happiness ! the mere fact of living is enough !

Beside him lies a book which he has thrown aside, well ! it was not very interesting, and one cannot blame a young fellow in the hey-day of youth, for not finding a dry-as-dust law book, pleasant reading. Stretched a few yards away from Gerry, lies Nep, the big Newfoundland dog, and cuddled up beside him is the little pug which Harold gave to Eily. Nep looks upon the new-comer with evident contempt, although he has just had a good romp with Puggy, and both are tired out, so have followed the young master's example.

Presently a youthful figure saunters out, daintily dressed in a thick white costume relieved with cherry-coloured ribbons, soft white lace round her throat, in which nestles two large buds of the Maréchal Niel rose. She swings a large shady hat in her hand as she approaches her brother.

"Good-for-nothing lazy boy!" said Eily, with an affectionate little kick, "are you going to lie there all day?"

"Why I haven't been here above five minutes," was her brother's reply.

"Oh! you fibber! for shame! but look, I fancy that yacht is tacking for here. I think she is the 'Flirt!'"

At the word "yacht" Gerry sprang to his feet, and at the same moment the doggies became alert.

"Yes! the 'Flirt' is making for here," answered Gerald, "she'll be in soon. Look here Eily!" he continued with emphasis, "be it understood, I won't appear in any of those hanged *tableaux* except with you or Maud, and"—

"Now listen to reason, boy!"

"No, I won't! I'm determined! you may as well back me up, for in the end I'd only leave you all in the lurch. I think the whole thing a confounded bore. If he wanted to give a dance, why couldn't he give one without asking a lot of people to make idiots of themselves?"

"I think Mr. Martin very kind indeed to try to amuse us."

"Kind indeed!" remarked her brother

with a sneer, "you and mother think such a lot of that fellow that I almost believe you're both in love with him."

"Oh! Gerry!"

"Faith I do! but I know why he wants to give this affair."

"Why?" asked Eily, and she squeezed his arm coaxingly, "do tell, there's a dear boy!"

"I don't want any of your soft sawder! I want your help, and I'll owe you one, if you don't manage about the *tableaux*. Martin wants to show off his costume again, that is the reason he wants to give this affair. Give the devil his due, now didn't he look downright handsome last night?"

"Don't call him a—hem! he did look very well indeed!"

"Yes! and the way all you women flattered him was perfectly outrageous. First there was mother, then you, and even Queenie should put in a word, but I gave her a pinch and she stopped short, and then at the ball—all the maids, wives, and widows, paid him so many compliments that his head is turned, but here comes a car! Now mind about me! What do you bet that Martin doesn't appear in the first *tableau* himself?"

The car drew up, Eily and Gerry went forward to greet the visitors, who were Major and Mrs. Greer, Miss Fowler, and Captain Detmar. They all entered the house, but presently Eily, Harold, and Miss Fowler came out again and sauntered off to the garden. Ella had heard of Mr. O'Mahon's roses, and asked to see them "while there was time, because" she said, "once we get discussing the *tableaux* we shan't think of anything else." So the trio went off to the garden of roses.

Soon the "Flirt" arrived, and Gerry got his boat and rowed out to land the visitors, while Maud stood waiting to receive them.

How lovely she looked, she was dressed like her sister, except that her ribbons were blue, her beautiful hair which was partly hid by the crown and veil at the ball, was now seen in all its luxuriance.

In a few minutes all were landed, Mrs. Greer and Mrs. O'Mahon came out and joined them, and the party was soon increased by the arrival of Mr. Martin, who drove his high steppers at a rapid pace up the avenue.

He gave a quick glance round, while he made his greetings, probably Mrs. O'Mahon understood, for she said—

"Eily is in the garden, she has taken Miss Fowler and Captain Detmar to see the roses. Is there anybody else who would like to see them? for if so go now, and tea will be ready when you come back."

"Never mind the roses!" said Gerry, "is there any one on for a set of tennis?"

He found three ready to play, so they adjourned for their game.

"Will you show me the roses?" said Percy to Maud.

"Yes, with pleasure! Come along!"

As she approached Mr. Martin, she stopped and asked—

"Did you telegraph?"

"I did!" he replied, with a frown. "May I go with you to the garden?"

"Yes!" she replied. "I think you ought to know the way, and I don't think you require my permission, but since you've asked it, you may come."

It was not the tone of this girl's voice that betrayed her dislike to Mr. Martin, for she was always polite to him, in not the smallest iota was she wanting in civility, still there was a certain something that was indescribable, yet which Mr. Martin felt. He knew Maud did not like him, and he was

most anxious to gain her goodwill. If she were any one else, he would have probably treated her with indifference, and in that way have given her a gentle snub; once he did try something of the kind, and got very well snubbed in return, and he soon found out, that she queened it over the rest of the family, and to keep up his footing as constant visitor, it was absolutely necessary to be on friendly terms with Miss Maud, so therefore he was polite and attentive to her, while she was equally so on her part towards him, but in their hearts neither liked the other.

They soon reached the garden and found Mr. OMahon cutting a bouquet of choice buds for Miss Fowler, while Harold and Eily had gone in search of lily of the valley, which he said was his favourite flower for a button hole bouquet.

The quick eye of Mr. Martin caught sight of the flutter of a white dress in a distant part of the garden, so he went to beg for some lily also, but he arrived too late, there was no more; so much had been gathered the previous day for bouquets there was hardly any left in bloom, there was only just enough for Harold.

“ You must wait until next week, Mr.

Martin," said Eily, "I'll give you some then."

"Thanks, all right! I'll keep you to your promise."

Then they sauntered back and joined the others. Percy was astounded at Mr. O'Mahon's roses; his mother was very proud of hers, but he had never seen such a show of bloom in the garden of Fernleigh.

After a while they were summoned to tea, and then began the real business of the meeting. Ella Fowler and Major Greer had arranged a programme, which, with some little alterations, was at last decided on. Gerry was right, Mr. Martin would appear in the first *tableau*. The boy was wanted, but much to his relief, he found he was to appear with either of his sisters, and Eily was the one selected. The dress she required would be lent by a young lady who was too nervous to appear herself.

Everything was satisfactorily arranged, and a day was named for them to go to New Garden for practice. Harold was not to take part in the *tableaux*, but he agreed to recite the prologue.

Then all said adieu. Mr. Martin went off with his high steppers, followed by Major

Greer's jaunting car, Ella and the Major were on one side, while on the other sat the missis and Harold.

How happy he was, he felt almost like Gerry, for he thought life was enough, if Mr. Martin had not come and interrupted them in their *tête-à-tête*, he would have told Eily of his love, but soon there would be another opportunity, he thought.

The yacht party were not in such a hurry to leave, the wind was in their favour, and they could get quickly back to Athlone, so some went and played tennis while others loitered on the strand.

"Why, here's a Maréchal Niel rose," said Percy, "how on earth did it come here?"

"Yes! I declare!" replied Maud, "I must tell papa. You must know he buds any amount of roses every year, the briars grow all along the shore, so he just buds them where they are, and then transplants the successful ones, but he evidently missed this. I must tell him, he will be quite delighted at this treasure trove."

The players finished their game of tennis, and soon the "Flirt" sped away from Wild Park, the two fair girls stood waving adieu as the white sails flapped and filled out with

the wind, and in a short time the little vessel was out of sight.

Percy stood watching the sisters as the shore receded from his view, how lovely they were, but what a fool he was making of himself he thought.

He had come to Ireland with the firm determination of asking Eily to be his wife, and he had hardly spoken to her all the day, but he would think no more of her sister.

Maud was brilliant, she dazzled him, still he thought Eily would suit him best, and he decided to keep to his former resolution, he would not again seek Maud's society. She was too clever, he had heard her quote Latin, true it was a common enough phrase, "*Bis dat qui cito dat*," but she had said it with a readiness when it was applicable, that showed she had no superficial knowledge of the subject.

He had contemplated transferring his attentions from Eily to Maud, but now he changed his mind again, for a clever wife would not suit him, he would like her knowledge to be less than his, he would like her to look up to him ; Eily would do so, he was sure, so he would think no more of the brilliant Maud, but would devote himself to her sister.

CHAPTER XII.

THE evening for the *tableaux vivants* at New Garden came at last. The invited guests arrived early, for they were all on the tiptoe of expectation, and there was great anxiety to secure good seats.

The drawing-room at New Garden was particularly suited to theatrical representations, it was long, and at one end there was a kind of raised platform, this had once been an adjoining room, but had been thrown into the drawing-room, and it formed an admirable stage for amateurs.

When Mr. Martin set about doing anything he did it well, accordingly very elaborate preparations were made for the entertainment. People came down from Dublin to arrange the stage, and the particular effects of light required for it, others came about the supper, decorations, and illuminations, for he had the avenue beautifully lighted with Chinese lanterns, and the effect was almost fairy-like, the soft subdued lights lending a charm to every tree and flower.

Phœbe Martin had arrived some days previously, and Mrs. O'Mahon tried in vain to persuade her to appear in the *tableaux*.

When Mr. Martin introduced his daughter to Eily, he said—

“I want you two to be friends, and hope you will like each other.”

Eily instantly felt that she would like Phœbe, and gave her a warm hand pressure which the young girl returned with a smile. Maud who was the means of bringing the young lady home, took hardly any notice of her, but she was so absorbed in the grouping of the *tableaux* that she thought of nothing else.

When the guests began to arrive Mr. Martin and his daughter received them, and everybody was astonished to find Miss Martin grown up ; for somehow people had been under the impression that she was a mere child, whenever her father alluded to her, which was not often, he always spoke of her as his little girl. She was over seventeen, and for ten years had been away at school ; she had seen her father once or twice a year, but there was hardly any affection on either side.

Mr. Martin never forgave Phœbe for being

a girl, it was not her fault, she had no choice in the matter ; but he did not remember that, he only thought he had been cheated some way. He was always accustomed to get whatever he wished for, he wanted a son and heir, and behold there arrived a puny girl. He had no welcome for her as a baby, he took no notice of her as a toddling child trotting about ; and when her mother died he sent her off to school, where he had gone to see her occasionally, just as a mere matter of duty.

When the telegram arrived, desiring Phœbe's immediate return home, she was startled beyond measure, for she was beginning to think that she was to remain there always, and she was glad of the change. Where is the girl to be found who does not like variety ?

She meant to try and be affectionate to her father, but she always felt that he chilled her; and indeed nothing could have been more chilling than his reception of her, and poor Phœbe shed bitter tears the night of her arrival home, which to her was so very unlike home.

Mr. Martin desired the principal of the school to get some dresses for his daughter,

and to engage a maid for her, so she arrived home as a young lady ready to preside in her father's house.

Phœbe was a tall, slight girl, with straight features, dark complexion, dark grey eyes, and black hair ; she was not exactly pretty, but at times she looked so, especially when she laughed or smiled. She was altogether what would be called a *distingué*-looking girl, and she appeared older than she really was. She received the guests with perfect composure, and Mr. Martin, for the first time in his life, was satisfied with his daughter. "She is not a beauty," he thought, "but she is a lady, there is nothing loud or fast about her."

After a time he had to leave in order to prepare for his part in the *tableaux*, and then he asked Mrs. OMahon to stay by his daughter's side.

The guests all got seated at last, there was a good deal of laughing, crushing and squeezing up in the seats to make more space ; for, large as the room was, it was hardly big enough for the number, that is big enough for each lady to take up space for three by spreading out her beflounced and befurbelowed train, so the fair dames had to wrap

their tails about them, and content themselves with a small space.

At last there was a beginning. Captain Detmar recited the prologue, and then the curtain was slowly raised, and the first *tableau* became visible.

Catherine, Queen of Cyprus, resigning her kingdom to the Doge Barberigo on behalf of the Venetian State.

All eyes turned on the three centre figures, Mr. Martin as the Doge looked well, he stood at a small table on which was spread a parchment, and his finger pointed to the place where Catherine was to sign. Her brother Giorgio Cornaro (Percy Langrishe), held the pen towards her, while Catherine stood aloof, sorrowful indecision depicted on her face; she knew how much she was losing in signing away her right to her kingdom, and she was not sure of what her future might be. Behind the three were grouped some Venetian nobles and dames, and crouching in the corner was Catherine's favourite attendant, a negress. Next to the three centre figures she was the object of attraction, and great curiosity was evinced to know who personated the negress, but no one could guess, and

even Ida Fowler failed to recognise her sister.

This *tableau* was a great success, and as the curtain slowly dropped, there was a loud burst of applause.

Then came the Heathen Chinee ! The young sub. in his handsome Chinese costume, Mr. O'Mahon as Bill Nye, and Dr. Moran formed the group of card players.

Which we had a small game
And Ah Sin took a hand,
It was euchre. The same
He did not understand ;
But he smiled as he sat by the table
With a smile that was childlike and bland.

The young sub.'s smile was perfect !
Then came Hamlet and Ophelia.

Get thee to a nunnery.

The next *tableau* was the painter Lippi, declaring his love to Lucrezia Buti, from Castagnola's picture in the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence. Gerry was the young painter, and Eily the novice ; she looked lovely in the nun's dress, and the two figures were placed exactly as in the picture.

As Harold gazed on Eily, he thought how

pure and saint-like she looked, and he was glad that her brother was her lover, for he felt he could not have looked on with patience if any other man were in his place.

Then followed Falstaff with Mrs. Ford and Anne Page, the meeting of Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots, and others, all equally good ; and then came the two last *tableaux*—Amy Robsart and the Earl of Leicester !

Eily O'Mahon looked as lovely as Amy as she did on her first appearance in the dress. Her husband was Percy Langrishe. Major Greer lent him his dress, and Percy was only too well pleased to appear with Eily, but what a stab it gave to Harold, who was ignorant of the plan, he thought Major Greer would have appeared with Amy. How angry he felt, and once again hatred of his cousin surged up in his heart.

Just at first they were friendly, more especially as Percy seemed inclined to devote himself to Maud, but of late his conduct was most peculiar ; one day he would hardly speak to Eily, and the next he seemed as if he wanted to atone for the previous day's neglect by the most devoted attention.

Harold could not understand his cousin's conduct, and indeed it puzzled others also.

When the curtain fell and hid Amy and the Earl from his sight, Harold breathed freely once again. He could not bear to look at them, and longed to give vent to his feelings, for he thought the most bitter things of Percy.

Then came the last item in the programme, it was simply named "An Artist and his Model," but before the curtain was raised there was a whisper that "Titian and la Bella" ought to have been the title.

In a few minutes the *tableau* was visible, there stood Titian as we have seen his picture, the grey beard, the black velvet skull-cap, the cloak bordered with fur, all perfect. In one hand a palette, in the other a brush which he poised in his hand as he gazed on his work just finished; he looked well pleased, and his attitude seemed to show his approval.

The picture was placed on an easel, a little to the left of it stood Maud O'Mahon, dressed as La Bella di Titiano; and she looked just as we can fancy the great painter's model, whoever she may have been, looked. Her dress was perfect in every little detail, her

hair arranged with the bow of narrow plaits and the long tress hanging on the shoulder.

On another easel placed behind, was the portrait of the Queen of Cyprus, and there were some people present who absolutely thought that Maud was the model for the two pictures, and who found it difficult to understand that the originals were painted in the 15th century,* and that Maud had copied her dresses from them.

Her extraordinary resemblance to these pictures was most curious, and Percy Langrishe, who knew every line in each, felt stunned and bewildered. When he saw Maud for the first time dressed as Catherine Cornaro, he thought her lovely, and then when he saw her as La Bella, he could hardly fancy he was looking at the same face.

Titian's studio brought the *tableaux* to a conclusion, and Major Greer was well pleased with his idea, for he proved that he was right in saying that Maud resembled both the great artist's portraits.

Supper followed the *tableaux*, and then came

* Catherine Cornaro died in 1510, aged 56. Her picture must have been painted when she was about forty or less, so it must have been one of Titian's earliest works.

the dancing, which by many was considered the best part of the entertainment.

For a wonder, Percy did not dance ; he said he was tired, he remained partly concealed behind a window curtain, from where he watched every movement of the two sisters.

That very morning he had determined to propose to Eily, he had received a few lines from his father who was expecting to hear of his engagement, and he had made up his mind he would dally no longer, but he had seen "*La Bella di Titiano*," and he could think of no one else !

He remembered when he was in Florence how he used to rave about the picture, and how often he wished he might meet some girl with even a faint resemblance to the pictured beauty, and now he had met her.

He looked from Eily to Maud, and from Maud back to Eily, and never was a young man in such a dilemma !

He felt he loved both, and he could not make up his mind between them.

For the first time in his life Percy lay awake all night ; he tossed and tumbled about, and courted sleep in vain ! How he wished he

had never seen Maud. If he had not met her there would be no cause for indecision; now he didn't know what to do, he was perplexed beyond measure, and at last he thought he would leave things to chance, whatever is to be will be! and there's no use in worrying oneself.

Kismet decides for all!

CHAPTER XIII.

Quelqu'on connaît—il ma cachette ?
C'est un lieu calme, où le ciel clair
En un jour de printemps rachète
Le mal qu'ont fait six mois d'hiver.

HARDLY a day passed without all these young people meeting each other somewhere. One day there was a tennis party at Rose Mount, where the Fowler sisters were staying; then there was another at Fairy Hill; there was a picnic at Carberry; and finally there was another picnic arranged to take place on a smaller island, which belonged to the Wild Park property, and in consequence it had lately been dubbed Cyprus, in honour of Maud. There had been a good deal of fun about it all, and the young queen always spoke of it as her kingdom, and there it was decided the last party was to take place, for in a few days the Fowlers, Harold, Percy, and Captain Dare were to leave for Dublin.

A glorious June day was welcomed by every one. There was a light breeze, just enough to fill the sails and bear the boats across the wide expanse of water. There

were many starting points, but all made for the one goal, so boat after boat landed its freight on the newly named island of Cyprus.

There was quite a large party, for a number of juveniles were invited, and their childish laughter could be heard a long way off. They found intense enjoyment in watching the fisherman Pat draw his net, and indeed in a little while some of the elder folks joined them, for to some people it affords amusement to watch the slow process of a net being dragged on shore. Little by little the ropes are pulled in and placed in coils, and then the two who are drawing it close in, and the net begins to be seen. Now comes the anxious moment. Will it be empty? or will it be a heavy haul?

Mrs. O'Mahon, Eily, Harold, Mr. Martin, and Captain Dare were watching the fisherman and his daughter, in company with several children.

"I'll bet sixpence it will be empty," said a juvenile aged about ten, who stood with his hands buried in his knickerbocker pockets.

"I'll bet! I'll bet a penny! Sixpence is too much," replied another youngster, dressed to correspond.

"I say, where did you two learn to bet?" asked Harold.

"From everybody of course," answered juvenile number one. "Why, you fellows all bet!"

"Yes; but we're men!"

"And we'll be men some day!"

"There's one for you, Detmar!" cried Dare. "Well, my young fellow, I'll take your bet. I lay you sixpence even there will be a good haul; if I win, I give it to Pat."

"I don't mind if it is a shilling," answered this juvenile gambler.

"Oh, don't, Master Tom!" said the fisherman. "You'll lose your money."

"I don't care!" was the independent reply.

Pat was right; there was a good haul. There were several pike and mullet, and seven large silvery-scaled trout.

How pretty the bright fish looked, and how they glistened in the sunlight! It seemed almost a pity to take them from their native element, and Eily said so to Pat; but the poor fisherman could not agree with her, and only wished he could get such a haul often.

The juvenile gambler handed over his six-

pence with a *sang froid* that showed that the young gentleman often betted.

Mrs. O'Mahon had come there with a purpose, and by her direction Pat's pretty daughter danced off with the trout and took them to the Wild Park cook, who had arranged a temporary kitchen for herself, and who was busy preparing for the dinner, the great event of the day.

Eily wandered about with Harold and Captain Dare, who had lately been getting rather marked in his attentions to her, so Harold had to postpone his love tale for yet another day. Not once did he get a chance of being five minutes alone with Eily ; some one was sure to be *de trop*. Sometimes it was Maud, another time Phœbe Martin or Ella Fowler, and, oftener still, Mr. Martin, Percy, or Dare ; and Harold often wondered was it that the fates were against him, or how was it ?

What a merry gathering was that picnic !
And how they all laughed and talked !

Can there be anything jollier than a picnic party, where every one, or nearly every one, is acquainted with each other ?

A lovely little island, where the grass is green and studded over with wild flowers

with trees to keep off the glare of the sun, is just the place for such a party. The view was lovely, the viands and liquids good, and the company all on good terms with one another.

"Now, your Majesty!" said Major Greer, "I think, as we are visiting your kingdom of Cyprus, you ought to invest some of your trusty knights with the order of the 'Commenda Piccola.'"

"I am sure I don't know what you are all talking about," said Mrs. Macarthy, grandmother of the young gambler. "I see no cypress tree here. We have the largest in the county."

Of course there was a laugh at the old lady's mistake; then things were explained to her, and she seemed to think it all very frivolous and absurd, and she told Ella Fowler she thought it a great mistake to send girls so far away from home, for then they come back with all kinds of ridiculous notions, and can never be satisfied with quiet country life. "She didn't approve of girls being taken out of their sphere," she said, and asked Ella what she thought on the subject?

Ella did not quite understand what the old lady meant by a girl's sphere, but nevertheless

less she quite agreed with her in everything.
That was a little way of hers !

She told Mrs. Macarthy her views were quite correct, and thereby made a favourable impression on the old lady, who declared that Miss Fowler was a nice, sensible girl.

How easy it is to get on with old people ! Say their views are correct, that is all ; they are satisfied, and you win their good opinion.

Of all the people at the picnic, the two who probably enjoyed it most were Ida Fowler and her *fiancé* ; they were quite satisfied with the present, and their future looked tolerably fair. Of course the going away to the antipodes was a trial, but Ida had counted the cost of it all, and elected to go. Her mother felt it bitterly, for she was her favourite child ; if it had been Ella she would not have cared so much. She did her best to prevent the engagement, but had to give a reluctant consent in the end.

Time passed quickly, and at last there was a move. Mrs. Macarthy, her daughter, and the two youngsters were off first, and then others went who lived at some distance.

Mrs. O'Mahon invited the Athlone people to return by Wild Park, and accordingly they

made a start. Maud, Ella Fowler, Phœbe Martin, Percy, Dr. Moran, and Gerry went together, and Maud proposed that they should land at the point a little way off, where there was a pretty view, and walk home. They all agreed to her proposal.

The view was charming, and the wealth of wild flowers was a sight worth seeing. Phœbe was in ecstasy, she loved flowers passionately, and had little opportunity of enjoying them during the many years she had been at school.

They all strolled along together, a merry, happy party. Suddenly they were disturbed by a wail of distress, evidently a cry from some one in great grief. In a moment there was silence, and the girls paled, as they thought some fellow-creature was in pain or trouble.

"I wonder what it means," said Maud, "I must ask! The cry came from the Doolans' cabin, it is just round here."

In a minute they were in view of the miserable dwelling of the Doolan family; seated on a stool outside was a wretched-looking woman, and clinging about her were some six or seven young children, tiny little imps, the mother rocked herself from side to side, crying in bitter grief.

Maud stood still for an instant, as she caught sight of the group.

"Something must have happened to Mick," she said, "oh, how dreadful! but no! thank God! there he is," she quickly added, in a tone of relief.

And there stood Mick leaning on a gate, he did not see Maud who approached the woman.

"What is the matter Biddy? you seem to be in trouble."

"Oh! Miss, I am, I am," and a loud burst of grief followed.

"Can we do anything for you?"

"You're very good, God bless you, Miss! but you can't bring her back to life."

"Oh!" said Maud, somewhat awed, "have you lost one of the children?"

"Oh! worse, Miss, a great deal worse!"

"Why what could be worse? I see Mick is all right."

"Oh! it's the pig, Miss!" and another wail burst forth as the poor woman mentioned her loss.

Percy turned aside and laughed heartily, when he heard the cause of Biddy's intense grief. He couldn't understand how much the pig meant to her, he didn't know that perhaps

it meant the rent, or clothing for herself and her family ; but Maud looked serious and told him it was no laughing matter, for the loss of the pig might put the poor family into difficulties that would take a long time to get over.

“ Are you really serious ? ” he asked.

“ Quite so ! a pig means a great deal to such people.”

“ I’ll come see you to-morrow, Biddy, and I’ll tell mother, perhaps she might be able to spare you a bonneen. I know there are some.”

“ God bless you ! and keep you from all trouble, Miss ! ” said Biddy gratefully.

“ I am sorry I laughed,” said Percy as they moved away, “ but it was so sublimely ridiculous, I couldn’t help ! That the death of a pig was worse than that of a child seemed so absurd that no one could help laughing.”

“ It seems dreadful to say so,” remarked Maud, “ she could have spared the child much better, she had only one pig, and she has more than enough of children. I hope mother will help her.”

Percy turned back, and went towards the woman who still remained in the same posi-

tion, he gave her his card, and told her to send her husband into the barracks early the following morning.

Mick did go in to Athlone the next morning, he came back with a light heart and beaming face; and he did not come back alone, for he was given his choice of all the pigs in the market, and doubtless he knew how to select one, for he shouted out to his wife—

“ Come Biddy and see the greatest beauty of a pig you ever clapped eyes on ! the gentleman bought it for us. God bless him ! ”

“ And what did you say to him, Mick ? ”

“ Say to him ! ” he replied, “ why I clapped him on the back, and I said, Good luck to your honour’s brad back ! ”

“ God bless him ! ” said Biddy, and many a prayer for Percy’s welfare went up from that poor cabin—prayers that were poured out from hearts full of gratitude to him, who had helped them in their hour of need. For many a day prayers were offered to God for Percy’s well-being, and preservation from evil here and hereafter.

CHAPTER XIV.

Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits.

Two days after the picnic Captain Dare, Harold, and Percy, drove over to Wild Park, to say good-bye, as the next morning they should start for Dublin.

Eily and Gerry were playing tennis in a desultory kind of way, but left off on the arrival of the visitors, and all adjourned to the drawing-room where they found Mrs. OMahon and Maud. Shortly, Mr. OMahon made his appearance, and after a while he proposed a set of tennis ; he and Harold had played frequently together and they invariably won, so he wanted to have yet another victory, Gerry accepted the challenge provided Eily would be his partner, and as she was always ready to do the boy's bidding she agreed, and so the four adjourned to the tennis court.

“When are you going to Kingstown, Mrs. OMahon ?” asked Captain Dare, “I suppose you will be there for the regatta ?”

“I don't think we are going to Kingstown

this year, I fancy we are likely to go to Salthill."

"That is just the same thing, Salthill is quite near."

"You misunderstand me, Captain Dare, I mean Salthill near Galway."

At these words a blank look came into the face of Percy, he seemed disconcerted and angry; he had been thinking so much about meeting the O'Mahons at Kingstown, and had already made numerous arrangements for yachting parties.

Maud raised her head, which was bent over a piece of crewel work, and looked across steadfastly at her mother for a few seconds, and then she spoke in a hard voice, quite unlike her usual winning tones.

"May I ask since when have you changed your mind? and your reason for doing so?"

"Well, you see Maud," apologetically, "you girls only know the people who live just near here, and I hear a great many are going from the county to Salthill this summer, so I fancy we ought to go there also. Mr. Martin thinks it is desirable for you girls to meet your neighbours, and I"—

"Oh! I see!" interrupted Maud, as an angry flush deepened her colour, "pray what

business has Stephen Martin to interfere in the ordering of our movements?"

"My dear child! he does not interfere, he merely suggested, he intends to take Phœbe there, and I thought you girls would like it."

"Our plans were made long ago," said Maud, with a look of determination, "I for one will brook no interference on Stephen Martin's part. I go to Kingstown or I remain here, and when I see Mr. Martin, I shall just tell him not to dare to meddle with our affairs."

Mrs. O'Mahon knew very well that Maud was quite capable of doing what she said, and she also knew that her daughter disliked Mr. Martin, and that he had no fancy for her, so that if they two had a quarrel, it would be no little tiff, that would be over in a few words, and she was anxious that there should be no disagreement between them.

"My dear Maud, I beg you'll do nothing of the kind," she said, "Mr. Martin only suggested, and I think he is quite right, for really you ought to meet the people amongst whom you are likely to spend your life."

"I am not at all likely to do anything of the kind! I am sure I hope not!"

"Well, you must," replied her mother, "unless you marry and go away."

"I mean to marry!" replied Maud, in a nonchalant manner.

"But you might marry and stay here!" suggested Captain Dare, who was amused at the discussion.

"Not at all likely!" replied Maud with a laugh and a toss of her pretty head. "The men that I have met here would not suit me, they are not of my kind. How could I marry a man who thinks that Roscommon is the one place of importance in the world? I find the people here are all alike. They care for nothing that goes on outside of the county, they think the sayings and doings of every one in it is of the greatest consequence. They think the *Roscommon Gazette* and *Galway Thunderer* more interesting than the *Times*. They have a notion that without them and their county the world couldn't turn on its axis."

But reader, is not this the case everywhere?

It is the same all over the world! If the hard-riding, fox-hunting, Irish squire thinks his own particular county the one of mos

importance, are there not others in other places who think likewise ?

Go to Warwickshire, Norfolk, Yorkshire or anywhere else in England and the squire of any one county will tell you that his shire is the one on which the whole well-being of England depends.

Go to Rome and there you will find the same idea exists. But who can blame the Roman for being proud of his city ? Empress of the world Rome was once, and even still she is great. Great in her ruins, great in her history, great with the dust of ages, and she will be great as long as the world lasts. Look at that glorious ruin the Coliseum, and can you doubt that no matter what Rome may be now that once she stood alone in her pride and power ? The Venerable Bède wrote thus of that magnificent monument of past ages : “ As long as the Coliseum stands Rome shall stand, when the Coliseum falls Rome will fall, and when Rome falls the world will fall.”

Thank Heaven ! the noble pile seems steady as a rock. There is no sign of decay, and let us hope it will last some centuries yet. I, for one, like to reflect on the prophecy of

Bede with regard to the fall of the world, and believe in it in preference to Mother Shipton's prediction on the same subject. We can look at the Coliseum and laugh the old lady's rhymes to scorn !

Then see Florence, bella Firenze ! the city of flowers ! There you will find the Florentine with the same belief. He thinks his city first and fairest, and how fair and lovely she is reposing in the vale of the Arno. How proud the Florentine is of her artistic possessions, of that lovely park the Cascine—where the song of the nightingale thrills on the air, and of that unrivalled promenade—the “Via dei Colli” from whence one sees Florence in all her beauty.

Then Paris ! dear, delightful, wicked Paris ! Is there a Parisian *gamin* or a *gommeux* who will not tell you that his city is the one place in which to live, that everywhere else one only exists ? So all the world over it is the same thing. I daresay John Chinaman will declare his particular spot in the Celestial Empire as the one place that is best, and so we learn how true the song is—

'Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home.

And thus it is that all the world over the same feeling exists. John Chinaman, the Roman, the Florentine, the *gamin de Paris*, the English and the Irish squire all think "there's no place like home." It is natural for all to feel a love for his own particular Penates.

Did you ever hear a Yankee talk about home?

I don't mean an American who has been wandering about for some time and whose ideas have become enlarged. I mean one who has just come straight from New York, who still savours of the salt breezes of the Atlantic. Well, he will tell you that everything is best at home. I fancy when he starts on his voyage he takes "*Nil admirari*" for his motto, and he sticks to it with determination.

I remember once meeting a party of Americans in the Coliseum who went to see it for the first time by moonlight. The three ladies were in raptures, and spoke their admiration loudly; the gentleman was silent, and I thought that perhaps he was reflecting on the greatness of Rome in the pagan days when the glorious amphitheatre was erected.

He stood apart, silent, gazing about, while the moon shone down on us. The same moon that shone there ages ago, the same moon that shone on the blood of martyrs shed there, the same moon that will shine there until the end. At last he spoke. At last he found words to express the depth of his feelings !

“ Wal ! ” he said, “ I guess it is a real big thing ! Let’s go ! ”

Reader, I cannot write a nasal twang, but you can fancy how these words sounded, and thus the American dismissed from his mind the Coliseum ! He had come thousands of miles by land and sea to look at the venerable pile, and call it a “ big thing ! ” I only wonder he didn’t compare it to something at home ; but what a digression ! Dear reader forgive me ! I cry *peccavi* and *revenons à nos moutons*.

“ You made a mistake in sending us away, mother,” said Maud in a resentful voice. “ You ought to have kept us in Ireland and then probably we should have been satisfied.”

“ Eily is perfectly satisfied,” interrupted Mrs. O’Mahon, “ and you ought to be ! ”

“ I am not, mother ! How can I care about the things that interest the people

here? The chief topics of conversation are dogs, horses, cattle, the delinquencies of the tenants; what takes place at the petty sessions, and why So-and-so said and did such a thing. I hate it all more and more every day!"

"You must find it a very great change," remarked Captain Dare. "Even I am awfully bored sometimes."

"Pray don't misunderstand me!" cried Maud. "Don't think I am unhappy, for I am not! I am perfectly satisfied to spend the whole time with papa and the others. What I dislike is being expected to take an interest in things here. Mrs. Macarthy seemed quite hurt because I expressed no surprise when she told me that her daughter reared two hundred young turkeys. I only asked, 'Is that many?' You might have knocked her down with a feather she looked so horrified at my ignorance. I really know nothing about turkeys, chickens and pigs."

"You ought to try to learn," said Dare. "Who knows but you may go in for that sort of thing yet!"

"*Jamais de la vie!* But you are trying to tease me, so let us change the subject. Here comes Mr. Martin!" she added, as she

caught sight of that gentleman's high steppers trotting up the avenue. "Now, dear mother, I hope it is understood that you will adhere to the original plan of going to Kingstown, or must I speak to Mr. Martin? Papa will not approve of any change I'm sure!"

"If you are positive about going to Kingstown I suppose you must have your way."

"Mother, that is unjust of you!" angrily exclaimed Maud. "You know very well you arranged all about going there yourself, and you never even gave a hint of a change until a few minutes ago."

Mr. Martin and his daughter entered, and there was an end to the discussion; the course of conversation ran smoothly, there was no little hitch, pleasant chat, and gay laughter were accompanied by the clatter of tea-cups, saucers, and spoons. The tennis quartette came to partake of the refreshing beverage, Mr. O'Mahon was jubilant; he and Harold had won two sets very cleverly, for the play had been very equal.

At last there was a little break in the conversation, just what Maud was waiting for.

"Papa," she said, "Mr. Langrishe will

take us in his yacht along the Wicklow coast, which you want to see so much. I've told him you and I will go with him the very day after we arrive in Kingstown."

"In Kingstown!" exclaimed Phœbe Martin. "I didn't think you were going there."

"Oh! yes," replied Maud, "it has been arranged for a long time; there could be no alteration in our plans *now*."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Phœbe, in a doleful voice, and with a face to correspond. "Papa has taken a lodge at Salthill."

"I have almost arranged about it," said her father, "but I didn't know"—and he looked at Mrs. O'Mahon, hoping to get some glance by which he might understand the reason of the change, for, when last he spoke to her, she had commissioned him to inquire about a lodge for her, and he had come that day to Wild Park to bring her an account of one he thought would just suit. But Mrs. O'Mahon did not notice him, she thought it was just as well to let Maud have her say, for she knew her daughter would make no rude remark to Mr. Martin in the presence of people, and it would save her the trouble of explaining to him.

"I am sorry you are going to Salthill, Phœbe," said Maud, "for I am sure we shall have quite a good time, as the Yankees say. Mr. Langrishe will bring over the yacht to Kingstown."

Mr. Martin knew from the tones of the young lady's voice that she meant to go to Kingstown, and nowhere else. He understood her by this time. She was perfectly obedient and dutiful in her conduct towards her mother, but, at the same time, she was able to influence Mrs. O'Mahon in all things, and would never allow her to alter any plan that was satisfactory, or deemed so by herself and sister. As for her father, she simply wound him round her little finger, and he thought the very sun shone in his daughter's lovely eyes.

Mr. Martin did not like Maud, she was antagonistic to him.

Maud did not like Mr. Martin, he was antagonistic to her.

Adieux were said, and Mr. Martin had to drive away baffled. Twice Maud had beaten him, she obliged him to bring his daughter home from school, and now she prevented her mother going to Salthill. For

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there ; he didn't want them to go to Kingstown, but Maud gained the day, and would have her way in spite of him. Poor Phœbe was sad and silent, she was bitterly disappointed, she had been counting so much on being near Eily, for they had become very devoted friends.

Harold was rather silent during the drive home, but the other two chatted away, especially about the discussion between Maud and her mother. Percy admired her spirit ; he thought she was quite right in not allowing her mother to be dictated to by Mr. Martin. Then Dare explained to him the true state of affairs ; how very much the O'Mahon family were in Mr. Martin's power.

"But for that being the case," he said, "I should almost fancy the mother was going in for a flirtation ; I don't think she likes him a bit, but she is afraid of him. Now, what will you bet that Martin does not turn up in Kingstown ? "

"I won't bet, for I think he will," answered Percy.

"Miss Martin says her father never changes his mind," remarked Harold, "and he has taken a house in Salthill."

“House or no house,” replied Dare,
“you’ll find he will be in Kingstown,
although I’m blessed if I can know what is
his little game, but time will tell.”

Yes, time tells all things !

CHAPTER XV.

In love, if love be love, if love be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers;
 Unfaith in aught, is want of faith in all.
It is the little rift within the lute
That by-and-by will make the music mute,
 And ever widening slowly silence all.

NEXT day the three young men started for Dublin; on the way up Harold asked Dare to stay a few days with him before going to England.

"Thanks, I cannot," he replied. "Now that I am safe off, I don't mind telling you two that I am going to be married. I said nothing about it down there, for I knew the fellows would chaff so. Not one knows about it, so well have I guarded my secret."

Of course the cousins were both surprised, for neither had for an instant dreamt of such a thing, they did not think Dare was in love, much less engaged. Lately Harold had begun to imagine that Dare fancied Eily, for he sought her society frequently, and seemed to care about no one else. As soon as Percy became uncertain in his attentions to

Eily, Dare's became marked, and Harold feared both as rivals, first one and then the other. Lately his cousin's conduct had been most peculiar, one day seeking the girl, the next day shunning her, so Harold thought, that after all Percy would not interfere in the end, and in consequence felt a wee bit friendlier towards him; and now, what a relief to hear that Dare's attentions meant nothing. The news removed a load of care and anxiety from his heart; at last the coast was clear for him, for he felt sure Percy would not trouble him again.

They both congratulated Dare, and asked about his *fiancée*, and learnt from him that she was the daughter of a clergyman, who died a year previously. They had been engaged for some time, but in consequence of her father's death their marriage had been postponed. Now he was going to claim his bride, and they were to be married from her uncle's house near Harrogate.

"His name is Colonel Somers, probably you know him Percy," concluded Dare.

"Yes, I know him, and your *fiancée* must be the nice girl of whom my mother spoke; she thought her charming, and was loud in

her praises, and wanted me to go in for her."

Dare laughed, and looked well pleased ; he liked to hear his Isabel praised, and it was pleasant to hear that she was thought well of.

"Yes," he answered, "she is charming, and I think her almost pretty, she is something in the style of Miss O'Mahon ; she might pass for her plain-looking sister ; in their manners, voice, and accent they are very much alike, and that was my reason for seeking the lovely Eily's society so frequently. When I heard her speak I could almost fancy I heard Isabel's voice, and therefore it was a great pleasure to me to be with her. She was the only girl I cared to associate with, and it was simply because she reminded me of Isabel, not indeed that I required any reminder."

"Positively Mars *is* in love," laughed Percy.

"Are you quite heart-whole yourself? Which is it? Eily or Maud? I verily believe you don't know."

Percy didn't know, or at all events he said he did not, which comes to the same thing

almost, however Harold knew, or thought he knew, but he kept his counsel.

At the Broadstone the young men separated.

Harold went off to his quarters, while Percy and Dare dined, and then left for England, and they were nearly all the journey together, for it was only when they arrived at York that their paths diverged.

Percy found his father like a bear. For a little while his old temper had come back again, and there was not much peace for some days. But as a storm expends itself in furious winds, a toothache wears itself out with raging pain, so the baronet's bad temper wore itself out in bursts of violence, and at last there was harmony again.

Percy bore the brunt of his father's ill-humour with patience, for he knew that in a measure he was to blame for it. He knew how anxiously the old gentleman desired a daughter-in-law, and he had left home with the ostensible object of asking Eily to be his wife. He told his father he was sure to come back engaged, and he returned as he went.

Sir Charles was bitterly disappointed. Almost from the hour of Percy's departure

he began to look for news from him. Day after day he opened the post-bag with eagerness, only to be met with a frustration of his hopes, the wished-for letter, the watched-for telegram never came. And at last Percy came, and came as he went. For days the baronet only growled at his son, but finally his curiosity got the better of his temper, and by degrees the growls became less frequent, and at last ceased altogether.

"Well, Percy," he said, "tell me how it was. Why did she refuse you?"

"She didn't refuse me, father."

"Not refuse you! Why, I thought that was the reason."

"No, sir. I didn't ask her."

"In the name of wonder why didn't you?" flaming up a bit. "You went from here with that intention."

"I know I did. But, somehow, when I saw her again—I don't know how—but I"—

Percy stopped short. For once in his life he was at a loss for words.

"Speak out, man! Why didn't you ask her?"

"Well, she looked different. I think she is delicate."

"Delicate!" echoed Sir Charles. "In that case you were right. Don't marry a delicate wife whatever you do. But you didn't say anything about delicacy before. Is she consumptive do you think?"

"I hope not. I never thought her delicate until I went to Athlone. She seems paler than when I met her in Dublin, and she looks fragile beside her sister."

"Her sister! and what is she like?"

"She is the loveliest girl I ever saw in my life!" answered Percy with animation, and there was a vibration in his voice that struck the keen ears of his listeners, for Lady Langrishe was present, and as her son spoke of Maud she smiled slightly.

"Why, you said the same of the other," said the baronet.

"I had not seen the younger then. There is a great difference between them," answered Percy.

"Then you have transferred your affections, or attentions, or intentions, or whatever they may be. Is that the case?"

"Well, I believe it is, father," hesitatingly replied Percy. "When I went to Athlone I really intended to propose to Miss

O'Mahon, but the younger sister bewitched me."

"Then in the name of wonder why didn't you ask her?"

"It was rather soon, I thought, but before long, I"—

"Why, are you going again?" interrupted the baronet.

"Yes. I am going to Kingstown next month, and they are coming there. Howard has promised to lend me his yacht, and the O'Mahons will come out in her with me. This time, father, I really do mean to propose. On my honour I do!"

"I sincerely hope you do, Percy. You know, my boy, I want to see you married." The baronet's voice quavered as he spoke. "I don't want the good old property to go off to the younger branch. On you all depends, and for God's sake don't let it go, Percy. I couldn't rest in my grave if I thought that damned sneak should ever be master here."

"He shall not!" emphatically declared Percy.

"Don't give him the chance, my son. Marry; marry soon! I want to see your

wife before I go, and I feel I have nearly done with life, for I am getting very feeble. She won't have long to wait until she'll be 'my lady!'"

"Don't say that, father!"

"It is only the truth, Percy!"

He looked more closely at his father, and noticed a difference which he had not remarked before.

There was no doubt the baronet was much changed. He looked haggard and feeble, and his former exact trimness of person was gone; and, worst sign of all, he neglected his clocks, for now he allowed either Lady Langrishe or his valet to wind them up.

Suddenly a thought struck the baronet.

"This girl—this younger sister—is she delicate too?"

"No, father. She is the picture of health."

"All right, Percy. Don't shilly-shally any longer. Be in earnest, my boy. A handsome, healthy wife is not to be got every day. Take care, or some other fellow might snap her up. Marry soon, Percy; marry soon, and keep that fellow out."

Later, Lady Langrishe had a long talk with her son, and to her he confided all about Maud.

"When I saw her," he said, "the living, breathing, beautiful Queen of Cyprus I forgot all about her sister. I fought hard against my inclination, I did my very best to get over my infatuation, for I thought it would not last. I even decided to ask Eily, but I could not do it, mother, the very first glance at the young queen did for me; and I feel now she is the only one in the world I could marry. Can you blame me, mother, when you look at that lovely face?" And he pointed to the portrait of Catherine Cornaro, which he had brought back and placed in its former position.

"It is a very lovely face," said Lady Langrishe; "but she looks proud, cold, and haughty."

"I think Maud is proud, but she is not a bit vain. She is very clever, and very well educated; she has a lovely *mezzo* voice, and sings beautifully; but, mother," and he looked piteously at Lady Langrishe, "her hair is glorious—a rich, golden mass, the colour that Titian loved to paint, and alas!

the colour that my father hates ! I dreaded his asking the question, but that he forgot, thank goodness ! What shall I do if he does ask, mother ? ” in a plaintive voice.

“ Avoid the subject as best you can. Say nothing about her beauty, and he may forget to ask about her hair. If you were once engaged, there might be a breeze or two, but it would soon blow over. He is so anxious for your marriage, that I almost think he could forgive the golden locks.”

“ I know he is anxious. I’ll try not to disappoint him again.”

“ I hope you won’t ; and now tell me about Harold.”

“ He is as devoted as ever to Eily.”

“ Has he spoken yet ? ”

“ I thiuk not, but the coast is clear for him now. I have retired, and it turns out that Dare is engaged.”

“ And there is no one else ? ”

“ No one in particular,” replied Percy. “ All the fellows about are more or less after either of the sisters. Eily is the greater favourite, for she makes herself agreeable to all, while Maud is capable of snubbing people.”

“ And you and Harold ? ” asked Lady

Langrishe, as she looked with keen anxiety at her son.

"Well, we are tolerably friendly now. We didn't disagree about anything."

"But are you friends?"

"Yes, mother, in a degree!"

Percy winced as he answered this question, he felt no ill-will towards Harold, still he did not feel as he used to in former days, and never, never again could he be the same.

The "little rift" had taken place. The little rift that bears no mending, no patching up of any kind ; that will surely widen as time goes on. The little rift in love or friendship bears no repairing. If it is allowed to take place all is over. By degrees, perhaps, by very slow degrees the breach widens, the love or friendship weakens, cools, then dies for ever, and the music is mute.

Stay! some will cry. What about the old quotation, "The falling out of lovers is the renewing of love?"

It may be true. Perhaps it was so in the days when these words were written, but now things are very different.

Are we the same kind of mortals who inhabited ancient Rome?

No ! I think not, the world is changed, and
we are changed !

Our bodies are like the bodies of those who
lived ages ago, but our minds are different.

They must be so ! There was no steam,
no fever, no unrest in former days ; while
now all is bustle and confusion. We rush at
everything ! We hurry through life, from
the cradle to the grave !

Of course there will be lovers, and lovers
will quarrel and make friends again until the
end of the world, but are things quite the
same between them, after that first quarrel ?
I think not, although they may fancy that all
is right again. No ! that first quarrel was
the "little rift," therefore all ye lovers avoid
that first tiff ; never mind the delicious bliss
of making friends again, but keep friends
always !

A first tiff having taken place, a second one
is easy, a third easier, a fourth follows,
and so on. Then take warning engaged
lovers, and married lovers, avoid the "little
rift." Trust each other all in all, and do not
risk making mute the music of life !

Then all ye friends !
I don't mean friendship in its namby

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pamby guise, where its name is used just as a cloak for sentimentality, or even worse, between a man and woman, for seldom, very, very seldom can there be a *real* friendship between such. They may think it so, they may call it so, but unless a careful watch is kept the so-called friendship drifts into sentimentality, and then—then Mrs. Grundy speaks !

I mean friends, real ones, men who feel an almost brotherly love for another, who is not of their kin ; women who can sometimes be a true and loving friend to another woman. Such are real friends, and where the little rift is never allowed to come, what sweet music that friendship can make through life, and as days, weeks, and years go by, and no “little pitted speck” is in the fruit, what a good thing that friendship is. How much we ought to prize it, and as we sink down to the dark valley of death, or perhaps see our friend go there before us, is it not a good thing to look back and remember there was no “little rift,” no “pitted speck ! ”

Yes ! it is very good ! it is well to be able to say at the close of life, Thank God ! I had a true friend !

Alas ! few can say it now-a-days ; there is so little time for friendship ! acquaintances count by hundreds, while friends are units !

There are many friendly acquaintances that are worth being prized and valued, although real friendship does not exist between such, the true ring is wanting, but still, all who have friendly intercourse with pleasant acquaintances ought to be satisfied.

Therefore, avoid anything that might cause a split, and as time goes on, the friendly intercourse might develop little by little into a lasting friendship, that is, if no little rift occurred.

A little rift happens so easily, but what a change it makes. It may come between lovers, and then the halcyon days are over. Friends are never the same again, and alas ! sometimes a little rift comes between husband and wife.

In that case if the breach is bound up speedily, and watched carefully, it may never increase, but how often the rift is neglected at first, pride may prevent the remedy being applied, and then it slowly widens, and life is never the same again ! No never !

Avoid the rift ! trust each other all in all,
for oh ! how easily things go wrong !

Alas ! how easily things go wrong,
A sigh too much, or a kiss too long,
And there follows a mist, and a weeping rain
And life is never the same agian.



BOOK THE SECOND.

ORANGE BLOSSOMS.

2

CHAPTER I.

What a gush of euphony voluminously wells!
How it swells;
How it dwells
On the future! how it tells,
Of the rapture that impels
To the swinging and the ringing
Of the bells, bells, bells.

ONE morning Percy received two letters, both were invitations to weddings, one came from Dublin, the other from Harrogate.

Captain Dare wrote to ask Percy to be his best man, the wedding was to be very quiet, as his *fiancée*'s mother wished there should be no fuss, indeed, she could not bear the idea of anything but a perfectly private marriage, and wanted it to be such.

However, Colonel Somers did not wish his niece to be married without some little show of festivity, so it was settled there was to be just a quiet little party.

The other invitation was got up in very bridal style, white and silver, and it evidently gave promise of a big affair, the Fowler wedding was to be a splash.

Percy accepted both invitations; he could

manage to go to the two by starting direct from Harrogate for Dublin, without returning to Fernleigh. So on the morning fixed for his departure he made his adieux to his parents for a couple of months at least.

Sir Charles again urged him to lose no time about arranging his marriage, and again Percy promised him that things should be settled before long.

In a private farewell to his mother he whispered—

“He never asked about the colour of her hair. Keep it dark, mother, for heaven’s sake !”

At last he was off, and as he drove down the avenue he turned at the bend to wave a final farewell to his parents, who were standing together at the library window. If he could only have guessed what was passing between them.

“I knew I was forgetting something,” cried the baronet, excited in a moment.

“What ?” asked Lady Langrishe.

“I never thought of asking the colour of her hair. He is gone too far to call him back.”

“Oh, yes, a great deal too far,” answered Lady Langrishe nervously.

"Dear me, how stupid! Why didn't you remind me?"

"I never thought about it."

"I wonder what colour it can be," said the baronet meditatively.

"I am sure it would be hard to say;" then, with a timid look, she added, "I remember his saying the elder sister's hair is black."

"Quite true! What a relief! I am so glad you thought about it, for, of course, it is natural to suppose her sister has the same."

"Yes! it is natural, but if she hasn't?"

"Well, if she hasn't, I—I"—He paused as an angry frown furrowed his brow.

"Dear! never mind about the colour of her hair. If he gets a good wife that ought to satisfy us."

"Yes, I suppose it ought," he muttered discontentedly. "Yes, I suppose I must be satisfied to see him married even to an albino. Anything to keep that damned sneak out. I begin to think I could welcome a red-haired daughter-in-law, if he had the bad taste to marry such a girl, only don't tell him so."

"I think his choice is made now," said Lady Langrishe in a tone of relief.

"I hope so. You might ask him to send

us a photo of the girl when you write to him ; tell him I should like to see one."

"Yes, dear, she must be a very lovely girl, for"—

"Why, how do you know?" interrupted the baronet suspiciously.

"From all Percy says," answered his wife.

She knew that Maud was like the portrait of Catherine Cornaro, but it was too soon yet to say anything of such a resemblance ; but at all events little hints would prepare the way, and she was very pleased to find that Sir Charles could even contemplate the idea of a fair or red-haired wife for his son.

Captain Dare's marriage with Isabel Somers took place very quietly. Percy was best man, and there was one bridesmaid, a youthful cousin of the bride's. Dare was quite right, Isabel resembled Eily O'Mahon in her voice and manner. There was a certain something in her every movement which instantly recalled the lovely Eily.

The wedding breakfast over, the bride and bridegroom took their departure amid a shower of rice and heel-less satin slippers, which the youthful bridesmaid flung with a will.

that meant mischief, but fortunately for Dare her missiles all fell wide of the mark. She wanted to hit him on the nose she said, for it would be such fun ; but he got off without the young damsel's being able to give the much-desired blow.

How joyful the young couple looked. If there is truth in the saying, "Happy is the bride that the sun shines on," Isabel Dare must have been truly happy, for King Sol reigned supreme that livelong day, not for one second did he hide his face. When he arose in the east that morning he must have known of the lovers, on whose marriage he was to shed his light, and he wished to augur well for them, for he wended his way up into the blue vault above, and then he sank slowly down to the west, showing his glory undimmed by even a passing cloud all through that wedding day.

Edward and Isabel Dare have no further place in our story.

Let them leave it 'mid sunshine, rice, and satin slippers (which fell wide of their aim) ; let them go out to the sound of wedding bells.

Hark ! how merrily they ring out as the

young couple start on their journey through life together.

Hear the mellow wedding bells,
Golden bells !
What a world of happiness their harmony foretells.

So Dare was married and gone away with his bride, and Percy was able to turn westward ; the same evening he started for Dublin, which he reached safely the morning prior to Ida Fowler's marriage.

The next day dawned brilliantly, but heavy clouds on the distant horizon gave warning of an approaching storm, and before the hour named for the guests to assemble in St. Peter's Church the rain fell in torrents, but soon the sun shone out again in his splendour, but only for a little while, for the day changed frequently ; now brilliant sunshine, followed by squally showers, which were again chased away under the influence of the bright rays of King Sol.

A large party assembled to witness Ida Fowler's marriage with young Evans ; there were Dr. and Mrs. Scott, Mr., Mrs. O'Mahon, Eily, Maud, and Gerry. Ida asked the two girls to act as bridesmaids, but they refused, as long before they made a compact with

each other never to be bridesmaid to any one until either of them was married.

Mr. Martin and his daughter, Harold, Percy, the jovial militiaman, whom Ella looked upon as her friend, and a large number of other guests, were also present.

Mrs. Fowler was fussily tearful, and talked much of the trial she had to bear in parting with her darling child, who seemed to be perfectly indifferent to everything and everybody. She was interested only in the set of her skirt, the fineness of her flounces and veil, and the number of her presents.

Ella was, of course, the chief bridesmaid. She, at all events, looked pleased, although her younger sister was getting off before her, and that is rarely looked upon as an enviable position by any sister. She was glad of Ida's marriage, and she said so; she didn't try to hide her satisfaction.

"Thank God! she's gone for better or worse," she said. "Now I shan't have to sit backwards when driving, and perhaps mother will come abroad again."

It had always been a great grievance with Ella that she was obliged to give way to her younger sister.

How often that happens !

A younger child manages to creep into a parent's heart ; no matter about the others, the pet must have his or her way. And what a tyrant that pet is ! Once the child has discovered the way to govern the parent, all sense of equality is over in the family, the others must suffer in order that the whims of the *one* may be gratified. Parents who make an idol of one, have much to answer for ; they are the cause of the ill-feeling that exists among their children ; ill weeds grow apace, and when youth passes into manhood, how often that feeling ripens into dislike.

Jealousy born of a parent's preference sometimes develops into hatred !

Mrs. Fowler had always been partial to Ida, and the girl knew how she could influence her mother ; she would twine her arm round her neck and press her cheek against her mother's face, and would purr like a young kitten until she coaxed her parent to accede to her whim of the moment. Ella had always to play second fiddle, so it was no wonder she was glad of her sister's marriage.

Phœbe Martin was bridesmaid, also the

sister and cousin of the bridegroom. Ida was very disappointed at the refusal of the O'Mahon girls, as she wanted to have six attendants, but Maud was inflexible, although the gentle Eily seemed inclined to give way to the importunities of Ella and Ida.

The wedding was a very gay one. Percy was told off to take Maud into the *déjeuner*, and they two at all events were quite satisfied with the arrangement. Harold was not so fortunate, Miss Evans fell to his lot, and doubtless that young lady must have found him very stupid company ; he certainly was not equal to entertaining her, for he was both dull and absent. He was thinking of Eily, and wishing that he could even see her, but that was impossible, for she was seated at the same side of the table, quite at the other end of the room, he knew Mr. Martin took her down, he thought that gentleman would have been with Mrs. O'Mahon, but her partner was Dr. Scott.

Harold thought the *déjeuner* never should end, he thought it an age. Would they never stop eating ? would they never stop drinking ? how greedy they all were ; but everything comes to a finale, and at last there

was a pushing back of chairs, a rustling of silks, and a kicking out of trains, and away they all sailed, maids and matrons, keeping up a running fire of little compliments to each other, as they wended their way upstairs to the drawing-room, where the cake was awaiting the ceremony of the first cut. Of course there was the usual fuss, it was held over the bride's head, while her four attendants grasped a knife and plunged it into the mound of richness and indigestibility.

The first slice was distributed among the maidens who were anxious to get a peep into futurity, and who hoped by means of the cake to secure dreams which should assist them, in foreseeing their future lot. Eily gave a small scrap to Harold, and told him to put it under his pillow, and he should dream of his wife; he told her he would do so, but the result of his dream is not known, nor indeed are the dreams of any of the party, except that of Charlie Fowler, aged thirteen, cousin of the bride, who admitted having eaten at least two pounds weight of the cake, and who had dreams, but they were not pleasant ones. So dreadful were they, that they necessitated his staying in bed the

following day until evening, when he arose a sadder and wiser man.

The bride and bridegroom took their departure, under the usual shower of rice and slippers, and then Mrs. Fowler collapsed. It was a hard blow to her, to see her darling child whose every whim she indulged, leave the parent nest without even a sigh, for Ida was perfectly calm and unmoved. The grief of her mother, and the joy of her sister, were all the same to her ; it was always her way, she only cared for herself, she wanted her George, and she cried, and coaxed, and purred, until she got her mother's consent. Now she was married, and she didn't care if her mother's heart was broken, or if her sister went mad with joy.

The guests soon dispersed, how could they console Mrs. Fowler, who only sobbed and snivelled in reply, to the many pretty speeches addressed to her, so they all went away.

“ Quite a pretty wedding ! ” said one.

“ Yes, charming ! ” said another.

“ How well the bride kept up ! she never cried ! ”

“ What was she to cry about ? ”

“Brides always cry ! ”

And so on ran the parting remarks.

Percy learnt the O’Mahons had taken a house in Windsor Terrace, and Dare was quite right, he would have won his bet; Mr. Martin got out of taking the Salthill Lodge, and was also installed in Kingstown. He had taken No. 50, Marine Terrace, and had a full view of the house in which the O’Mahons were located. No one could enter or go out without his seeing, if he chose to keep a watch.

Mrs. O’Mahon invited the two cousins to come down and spend the following Saturday, by which time they would be settled, they had only come up from Athlone the day previous to Ida Fowler’s wedding, and did not feel at home yet.

Off they went, Mr. O’Mahon, Maud, Gerry, and Phœbe Martin in one carriage, Mrs. O’Mahon, Eily, and Mr. Martin in the other.

“That man lives in her pocket,” remarked the jovial militiaman. “I wonder what he means ; he must know people will talk.”

“Time will tell what he means ! ” answered Ella, with a peculiar smile.

Yes ! time tells all things !

CHAPTER II.

A FEW days later the yacht arrived in Kingstown harbour. Percy then left Dublin and made the Marine Hotel his headquarters, and at once he issued invitations for a party on board. They were to have a sail, but only a short one, Mrs. O'Mahon was timid as to results, and Ella Fowler shared her fears. Mrs. Fowler could not be induced to accompany them on any terms.

Maud was in wild spirits, in fact ever since she came to Kingstown, she was in a state of exultation that was quite unusual, for she was always more or less dignified in her manners, but now, she cast dignity to the winds, she rejoiced about everything ; it seemed as if the sea air influenced her, as if it were champagne.

“The sea ! oh ! the sea, how glorious it is !” she would cry.

And is it not glorious ?

What is there to compare with the sea ? can a calmly flowing river ever give one the emotions that the sea inspires ? can a placid

lake rouse our feelings like the illimitable ocean?

O Mare! tremendo Mare!

The sea is great! the sea is tremendous!

Look at the big breakers, that dash on the west coast of Ireland, see them as they come along gathering force and power every second, until they fling themselves on the rocky shore. There one sees the ocean in all its grandeur and power, how different it is to the smiling Mediterranean, which is usually blue, placid, and waveless. How calm it looks, just as if tempting the timid to venture on its bosom; and then perhaps it will turn treacherous, and in half an hour or less, will lash itself into a fury, and big waves will rush after each other in stormy haste. A little while, and all that passes, and the Mediterranean is blue and *riante* again.

Our Irish Channel is quite another sea. It is mostly leaden colour, or a kind of greeny grey. It is never blue; but how could it be?

For a blue sea southern skies are wanted.

The greeny grey has a charm of its own, and it is good to look at, and our Maud found

it good. The sea was new to her, she knew little about it. She went a mere child to Germany, and after spending several years there, she was sent to the finishing school at Fontainebleau, and during all that time not once had she seen the ocean. Then she returned home, a short passage to Dover, later across from Holyhead to Dublin, and that was all she knew about it, until she came to Kingstown, when it seemed as if the very breathing of sea air infused her with a wild vivacity which was unusual.

“The sea! Oh, how I love it!” she would cry.

If she loved it, who knew so little about it, is it any wonder that those who have known it from childhood should love it? How much they feel a separation! They may not know how dear it is until they are far from the sea; but then how they miss it, how they pant for it, how they long for the salt spray to moisten their faces, and when they see it once again, what joy! Is it not like meeting a dear, old friend? The splash of the wave on the shore, the low moan of the tide is like music to the ear of the weary wanderer.

Maud found Kingstown delightful, and she infected the others more or less with her gay spirits, and she was the life of the party. How gay she was that day on board the "Phryne," and how happy they all were.

Even Harold was happy, deliciously so. He was near Eily. It did not matter if he never got a chance of a *tête-à-tête* with her. He could look into her eyes, and he could press her little hand. It seemed as if Ella Fowler and Phœbe Martin could not exist without Eily. Indeed the latter girl made a show of affection that was surprising considering how recently they had become acquainted, but it was not assumed in any way. Phœbe was young, she never had an opportunity of evincing affection for any one; she liked her school companions more or less; but she had never really loved any one until she came home.

She had returned to Ireland with the firm determination of loving her father, and of trying to win his regard. But soon that hope faded. He was stern, he was polite, and he was indifferent. While smarting under this disappointment she made a little, timid advance to Eily which was not repulsed,

but the contrary, and in a short time Eily had completely gained the affection of the poor motherless girl.

"Oh, Eily!" she would say, "I love you more than the whole world. Won't you love me and be my friend?"

And Eily would assure her of her undying friendship.

It certainly was trying to Harold. But then he thought a time must come soon, and meanwhile it was delightful. He sat beside Eily who had Phoebe's head resting on her lap. She was seated on a low stool at Eily's feet, while Ella was a yard or two apart. It certainly was aggravating to have two more company than he wanted, more especially as just opposite Percy and Maud were together making believe to study a chart. Much either of them knew about it, at least so said Gerry.

Mrs. O'Mahon was comfortably seated, and found sailing much pleasanter than she expected, beside her sat Mr. Martin, who looked stern and morose, and who barely uttered a monosyllable now and again. He evidently was not happy!

On the fore-deck Mr. O'Mahon and Ella's

friend the jovial militiaman, were together, smoking the pipe of peace, banished there by Mrs. O'Mahon's order.

Gerry joined the party of four, he said "two were company," and so he didn't wish to intrude on either of the couples at the other side, but he could do no harm where there were four.

On the contrary he amused them all, the "boy," as his sisters called him, was always full of fun, he took life very much as a good jest; he was young, he was healthy, full of spirits, and for him as yet, life was enough.

Was it not enough for all that day?

The smile was in Erin's eye, there was not even a sign of a tear, the weather was perfect, there was just the required breeze, it was nothing more, or nothing less than was wanted, it filled the sails, flap! flap! flap! and away they went. The Pier head was rounded, and on they sailed past Sandycove, through Dalkey Sound, round Killiney Bay, where they tacked, and bore down in the opposite direction close to Howth and Ireland's Eye, and back to harbour, and so ended their first excursion in Dublin Bay.

What a happy day it was! that sail by

some was never, never forgotten. That one delicious July day, spent sailing in Dublin Bay !

Oh! Bay of Dublin ! my heart you're troublin',
Your beauty haunts me like a fever dream,
Like frozen fountains, that the sun sets bubblin',
My heart's blood warms, when I but hear thy name.

Mr. Martin alone was out of sorts, he hardly spoke, and at last Mrs. OMahon asked him with solicitude if he felt ill.

"Not at all ! thank you !" he replied then after a pause, he remarked, "It is beastly hot !"

"I don't find it so."

By-and-by he condescended to speak a few more words.

"It is getting rather chilly," he said.

Mrs. OMahon looked at him in astonishment, not so Maud who laughed heartily.

"Don't ! Mr. Martin," she said, "if you keep on so, you'll be like the thermometer man !"

Mr. Martin frowned and muttered—

"How ?"

"Did you never hear the story ?"

"No !" with a scowl.

"I'll tell you," said Maud. "It happened in Germany. A lady introduced a young

man, to a girl as a partner for a set of quadrilles. He was shy ! Figure one began, the young man to his partner sighed, ‘It is rather warm;’ figure two, ‘Don’t you find it very cool?’ figure three, ‘I think it very hot;’ figure four, he was cool, and figure five, he was down to zero. Shortly after the lady asked the girl, ‘How do you like the young man I introduced to you?’ ‘Man!’ replied the girl, ‘why he isn’t a man, he’s a thermometer!’ So it seems, Mr. Martin, as if you were going to do thermometer for us. Why not admit the truth, and say you feel squeamish?’

He wasn’t the least bit squeamish, but he found he had drawn Maud’s sharp eyes on him, and he was a little afraid of her; he wanted to hoodwink her to the last, he knew he had up to now, but a trifle would make her suspect, and that would not suit him, so he took the cue offered by her remark.

“Well, Miss Maud!” he said, “it is very mortifying to have to do so, but I must admit I do feel a little queer, and I think I’ll go below and ask for some B. and S.”

When he returned to deck, the “Phryne” was running into harbour, and as soon as

she had anchored they all went below, and did full justice to the good things provided.

As evening drew on they returned to deck, the stars came out one by one, pale Luna shed her light on the rippling wave, row-boats laden with pleasure seekers glided about. One or two four oared-gigs sped along, propelled by stout rowers practising for the regatta; an outrigger went by like a flash, while the strains of the band on the Pier, came floating on the wind.

And then they sang. Maud's glorious voice rang out full and clear, leading the others. Percy's rich baritone blended with her voice and made such sweet music that all ceased, to listen to them. Song followed song, and then Time the tyrant, who never relaxes, who goes on careless whether we weep or smile, warned them to return, and so that happy day spent on board the "Phryne" was counted among the things of the past.

The Monday following, there was a picnic, our party of the "Phryne" went, and many others. The preliminaries were arranged the day of Ida Fowler's wedding.

Another lovely day, spent wandering about

in the cool shades of the Dargle. They dined, down near the water's edge, where splendid trees sheltered them from the hot sun, the noise of the falling water, as it leaped from stone to stone, kept up a running accompaniment to the clatter of knives and forks, the chink of glasses, and the laughter of happy voices.

Harold managed well, he succeeded in getting next to Eily, and although she did not devote all her attention to him, he was happy. Mr. Martin was seated at her other side, and he managed to join in the conversation, also Percy, who sat opposite, and who seemed quite anxious to devote himself to Eily, for he took no notice of Maud who was apparently enjoying a flirtation with an officer who was brought to the picnic by Dr. Scott.

Dinner over, they wandered about until evening began to close in, when they adjourned to Sydney Herbert's lodge for tea and an impromptu dance, which was kept up with spirit for an hour or so.

Once, that evening after a valse Harold strayed out with Eily, and they sauntered along the path. Now was his time to tell

her of his love, but no ! Mrs. O'Mahon and Mr. Martin turned round a sharp corner. There was very little light, but there was enough to show that she looked disturbed and agitated.

"Oh, Eily !" she said with a little gasp.

"Yes, mother ! do you want me ? "

"No, dear ! but—yes—you had better come indoors, you might take cold."

"Oh, mother ! there is not a breath of air."

"Night air is always more or less damp," remarked Mr. Martin.

Eily slipped her hand from off Harold's arm, where it had been resting, and turned back towards the lodge with her mother.

Shortly after they started homewards, and when Eily reached her room, she told her confidant she spent a delightfully happy day. For she had a confidant, and one who would not betray her, and tell of all the foolish things she talked.

Her confidant was Puck, the little pug that Harold gave her. She placed him on the table, where he gravely sat with his little black nose tilted upwards, he listened to all she said, as if weighing the matter in his

mind, he turned his head from side to side, as if anxious to comprehend the pros and cons of it all, and then he was kissed and caressed, and he kissed and caressed in return. The good-nights finished, he curled himself up in his little luxurious house and snored !

Snored so, that he often kept his gentle mistress awake, but this night the confidences and the caresses over, Eily soon sank to slumber, tired out by another long, happy day.

Puck twisted and turned again and again, he was not tired, at last settled himself to his satisfaction, and shortly snored like a trooper, or perhaps a simile is not required, it is sufficient to say the pug snored, for it is doubtful if a trooper could have excelled him in the accomplishment.



CHAPTER III.

Tout vrai n'est pas bon à dire !

ERIN's tears chase away her smiles very quickly, and the day after the picnic was cold, wet, and stormy, it was difficult to believe that the two days belonged to the same month, one was bright summer, the following wet and autumnal.

Wednesday was better, but changeable, however, the evening was fine enough to tempt people to venture out for the usual promenade on the Kingstown Pier, so Harold went down hoping to meet Eily, but she was not there, nor were any of the O'Mahon family. He met his cousin, who was alone, and asked him the idle question if he had seen the O'Mahons.

“No! I have not,” replied Percy.

“I wonder if they are at home.”

“You can go and try!”

“Will you come?” asked Harold.

“No!”

“Why not?”

"Because I don't choose, which is a very good reason."

"Certainly! good-evening!"

Harold moved on, he was undecided, he felt half tempted to go round to Windsor Terrace, but Mrs. O'Mahon had been very ungracious in her manner to him, after meeting him and Eily in the grounds the night of the picnic.

She had been almost rude to him when parting, so he didn't like to subject himself to a recurrence for the present, and so decided to return to Dublin, but he did not do so, until all chance of the O'Mahons coming out on the Pier was over. Then he strolled past Windsor Terrace, but he did not catch a glimpse of any one.

There was a light in Eily's room, he knew which was her window, and for a moment he thought could she be ill, could she have taken cold, but while his fears alarmed him he heard Gerry's lusty voice shouting out—

"Slap bang here we are again!"

What a relief! Eily could not be ill, for the boy would never shout so if his idolized sister were suffering.

To-morrow would soon come, and he knew

he should meet her at the Salthill flower show, so back he went to town.

In the meantime Percy paced the Pier, up and down, he was in a savage humour, and had been so ever since the previous Monday.

He wanted to monopolise Maud altogether, and was annoyed with any one who interfered ; as she preferred, or seemed to prefer, Captain Harcourt's company at the picnic, he was vexed with her, vexed with the Captain, vexed with Dr. Scott who introduced the Captain, in fact he was vexed with everybody.

Maud treated him with the utmost indifference at the picnic, and her conduct was so unexpected, and so inexplicable that he couldn't understand it.

On board the "Phryne" she was most charming, and a few days later she was stiff and reserved, but the fact was, some one had ventured to quiz her about Mr. Langrishe, and instantly her pride took alarm, she could not bear to have her name coupled with that of any man ; therefore she had been cool and distant, and had given him great offence. He resented her conduct, first by trying to pay devoted attention to Eily, and then by ab-

senting himself from the house, for since he had been staying in Kingstown he called every day at Windsor Terrace, but all Tuesday passed away, and no Mr. Langrishe. Wednesday went over likewise, and no Percy, but then he expected to meet her on the Pier in the evening.

At last he gave up the hope of seeing her, and walked round to the house. There he heard that Mrs. O'Mahon and Miss Maud were gone into town to the Gaiety ; Miss O'Mahon was not very well, and the gentlemen were just gone out.

Maud was very pleased on her return home to learn that Percy had called, for she had been bitterly disappointed at his not having come since the picnic.

Next day Erin was smiling again, the weather was most propitious for the flower show ; nature was disposed to be kind, and smiled on the display of Flora's wealth.

Harold arrived at Westland Row just too late for a half-hour train, he couldn't bear to wait for the hour, so he entered the express for Kingstown, knowing that he could return from there to Salthill, and even then reach the gardens earlier than if he waited for the next ordinary train.

When he reached Kingstown and was just about crossing over to the other platform he caught sight of a party passing along, Mrs. O'Mahon, Maud, Gerry, Percy, Mr. Martin, and Phœbe. Harold paused, Eily was not there ! Where could she be ? Perhaps she was ill, or perhaps she had gone earlier with her father.

Should he go on by the train ? or should he go to Windsor Terrace ?

For a second he was undecided ! He thought he would go on, but then he could drive to the house in a few minutes, and if she had already gone he could soon reach Salthill.

“ If you're going by this train, sir, look sharp ! ” said a porter.

“ Shall I go or not ? ” muttered Harold.

But the porter would not wait for reflection and banged the door in his face, so the question was decided, accordingly he went out, hailed a jarvey and was carried off to Windsor Terrace. Eily was at home.

Meanwhile the party reached Salthill Gardens, and as was natural, they divided into three couples ; Mrs. O'Mahon walked with Mr. Martin, Percy with Maud, Phœbe with Gerry.

Of course Mrs. Grundy is alert at a flower

show, there is so much opportunity of seeing and talking ; a flower show is one of her high festivals.

She wondered why Mrs. O'Mahon kept Mr. Martin in her pocket, for really nothing less could be said, the old lady supposed she was trying to get him to reduce the interest on the mortgage, and wondered would she succeed. She wondered how Mr. O'Mahon liked it all. He, poor man, seemed quite indifferent, he was absorbed in looking at the roses, and was comparing them in his mind with his own, and was thinking he could show as good as the best.

Mrs. Grundy remarked that Mrs. O'Mahon was not looking as well as usual, her confident demeanour was absent, she seemed nervous, and ill at ease, and her manner was cowed and subdued, she appeared as if she had been found out. Mrs. Grundy noticed the very marked change, and wondered at the cause.

Mr. Martin seemed more self-assertive than ever, he had assumed a certain air of pomposity, like that of a man who has just come in for a large and unexpected legacy. He walked with an authoritative stride, his head thrown back, and there was a triumphant

gleam in his eyes that meant victory. His every movement, his every tone, his every look meant triumph. He was faultlessly dressed, and he looked like a man who had succeeded in winning a big game.

Mrs. Grundy thought there was something which required explanation, her surmises were many, but they were all wrong.

She wondered if it would be a match between Maud and Percy, and had many comments to make thereon, and she wondered where the other girl was, and she wondered and talked about so many things that it would fill a whole chapter to give a full account of all she said that day.

Maud was not in her usual spirits, she seemed depressed and nervous, and soon wearied of the brilliant show of flowers and fashionable toilettes. Percy asked her again and again what caused her to appear so *triste*, but she evaded answering his question, and it evidently pained her for him to notice her low spirits, so he tried to amuse her by making remarks about the dresses and the people. Maud did not quite like being seen with him, she knew Mrs. Grundy took notice of them, and she could not bear to be talked about.

She was the exact opposite of Ella Fowler in this respect, for she gloried in hearing her name coupled with that of any man. The jovial militiaman seemed very devoted at the flower show, but Mrs. Grundy thought his attentions meant nothing, he was known to be a fortune-hunter, and Ella's dowry was hardly large enough to suit him.

Gerry and Phœbe were the jolliest of the party, and they at all events spent another happy day.

They all noticed that Harold was absent, for he never appeared, and they all wondered why he kept away.

CHAPTER IV.

Chi ha amor nel petto ha le sprone nei fianchi.

PERCY accompanied Maud home to her door, and asked her when parting if she should come out on the Pier later; she told him she thought not, as she felt sure Eily would not care to go, and she should stay with her.

Percy went to his club where he dined, and remained there till past ten o'clock, when he returned to the hotel. He was in excellent spirits, and hummed and whistled as he went along.

When he entered the hotel he was told a gentleman had been waiting in his room all the evening.

This news somewhat startled Percy; he wondered who it could possibly be, but even the surprise of an unexpected and unnamed visitor could not subdue his flow of spirits, and as he went up to his room he softly sang, "Come into the garden, Maud."

He opened the door of his sitting-room, a lamp was lighted but it was turned down to

almost its lowest point. There was a figure seated at the table, on which the arms were resting with the head lying on them. Percy turned up the light and instantly recognised the fair, curly hair of his cousin.

"Harold! what are you doing here?"

Harold raised his head, and never, never was seen more acute misery depicted on any face. He was deadly pale, his eyes were bloodshot and his lips quivered; he gave one look at Percy and then again flung his face on his arms.

But that one look!

It was agony, love, hatred, jealousy, all blended together.

The question on Percy's lips died without utterance. He put his hat aside and approached his cousin. Gently he put his hand on Harold's shoulder.

"Your mother! is she ill?" he asked, in a low tone.

Harold shook the hand off as if it were the touch of some loathsome thing.

"Do not touch me," he shouted, as he sprang to his feet, and faced his cousin.

"Harold, you are ill!" said Percy.

Indeed, he looked ill, more than ill, a meta-

morphosis had occurred within a few hours that rendered him almost unrecognisable.

"Ill! ill! my God! he says ill! I have got my death-blow to-day, and he calls that being ill!" and again Harold flung himself in the chair and resumed his former attitude.

"For heaven's sake explain, Harold! What has happened?"

For a minute there was silence, then Harold raised his head.

"You robbed me of her love, you went between us, and now you are trying to gain her sister's heart!"

"How? What?" gasped Percy, "what do you mean?"

"I mean that you deliberately laid yourself out to gain Eily's heart! You even wrote to her! Then when you won her love you cast her aside, and now you devote yourself to her sister!"

"I never won her heart!"

"You lie! and you know you lie!"

"I excuse what you say on account of the state you are in;" said Percy, "except that I know you well I should think you had been drinking."

"Don't talk rubbish! Can you deny that

last winter you did all in your power to win her?"

"I do not deny it! You were my rival!"

"I tried to be! God help me! You won her heart!"

"Good heavens! It is not possible!" gasped Percy, who now looked very nearly as pale as his cousin.

"I speak the truth!"

"How do you know?" eagerly demanded Percy.

"I was there to-day," replied Harold, in a low, hoarse voice, "I saw her. I told her of my love, and asked her to be my wife—she refused—then—I asked her why—but she would not tell. I importuned her, but without avail—and at last I accused her of loving you."

"And what did she say?" asked Percy, breathless with surprise.

"You're in a hurry to know! Well, then, she burst into tears, and flung herself on her knees, and implored me not to question her—begged me to go—to leave her—to forget her—to forgive her!"

"But that doesn't prove that she cares for me, and I don't believe she does."

"Because, now, another face pleases you ; but you have gained her love, and I ask you, what do you mean to do ?"

"Mean to do !" echoed Percy.

"Yes, mean to do ! Will you marry her ?"

"What ! Marry her ? Marry Eily ?"

"Yes, marry Eily !" said Harold, in a stern voice. "You must do so !"

"Must do so ! Good heavens, Harold ! I love the other !"

"Did you not once love her ?"

"I thought I did ; but I never thought of her since I met Maud."

"You lie again ! When we were in Athlone, one day you were all devotion, the next all coolness. I watched, and I saw how your conduct pained her. Then the other day at the picnic she seemed pleased because you noticed her so much."

"Harold, there must be a miserable mistake somewhere. I am quite sure Eily does not love me."

"Then why did she burst out crying when I mentioned your name ? If she did not love you she would have said so ; she only begged me to go, and not to question her. As I

hope in everlasting life, it is my firm belief that Eily loves you, and I have a right to demand, what do you mean to do?"

"My God, Harold! I can do nothing!"

"You can! You must marry her! I swear it! You stole her love from me. But for your cursed interference all would have been right."

Percy looked as woe-begone as he well could. How bitterly he now regretted the passing fancy he had once felt for Eily; it was the cause of all this misery to his cousin, and, if it were true that she loved him, what a dreadful thing it would be.

There was a pause of some minutes' duration, and then Harold spoke again.

"Will it be necessary for me to plead with you? or do you see the right course for you to take?"

"I love Maud."

"It does not matter whether you love Maud or not. You must marry Eily!"

A spasm crossed Harold's face, which showed the bitter agony it was to him to even contemplate such a thing.

"But I believe—I hope Maud loves me."

"Let her get over her love! I tell you you must marry Eily!"

"Why must I?" asked Percy.

"You remember what he said, that doctor in Athlone, I forget his name, but you know who I mean."

"Dr. Moran."

"Yes. Dr. Moran said if she were disappointed in her love she would die. Oh! Percy, don't let her fresh young life be blighted! He said she would surely die. Don't let her fade away! Percy, I never thought I could plead to you for such a thing; but I pray you—I beseech you—to make her your wife."

"But Maud?"

"Will forget you in a week. Moran said love would never kill her."

"I cannot do it, Harold! I cannot sacrifice my love; I do not care for Eily."

"She cares for you! Be warned in time, Percy! You have made me a desperate man; I feel capable of murder and self-destruction this minute. On your head be"—

"Harold, are you mad?" interrupted Percy.

"Very nearly so! You are the cause, and, if you do not marry Eily, you will have to repent having refused my prayer. I call God to witness what I say!"

There was silence.

The cousins stood facing each other. Harold had a look of stern resolution in his eyes that made Percy know he would carry out his intention, no matter how desperate it might be.

"I swear if you do not marry Eily it will be bad for you, and worse for the other—I mean Maud!" said Harold at last, in a hoarse voice.

During that short silence Percy had time to think. He felt quite certain that Eily did not love him; it was all a miserable mistake. He would see her and speak to her, and then, even if she did love him, he felt sure she would never wish to rob her sister of her lover.

"Harold, I will see her, and ask her if this is true."

"Will you marry her?" was the anxious inquiry.

"If she is willing to have me."

Percy felt he was safe in making such a promise, for the more time he had to think, the more convinced he was that Harold was mistaken.

"Thanks! I know I may trust you;

still I should like you to give me your word."

"On my honour!"

"You will ask her to-morrow?"

"Yes. And you?" said Percy.

"Don't come to me; I do not wish to see you again; but send me word what she says."

"And then?"

"I'll ask for leave. Later I'll exchange; I'll go abroad," replied Harold, whose voice was now quite composed. "For our mothers' sake—for auld lang syne's sake—I offer you my hand at parting, for, please God, I'll never look on your face again."

Their hands met for a second, and then fell apart. Harold staggered as if he were drunk, and then, with a husky good-bye, he left the room.

Out in the cool air his fevered brain soon felt relieved; then he got frightened at what he had done. He had made Percy promise to wed a girl whom he did not love, whose sister had won his heart, and who probably loved him in return. It was dreadful! Such a thing must not be, for in that way Eily's happiness could never be

secured. He would go to his cousin first thing in the morning, and tell him he was free to choose as he liked. But when morning came Harold was delirious; he was suffering from a sharp attack of fever, and, in the intervals of consciousness, he used to think that perhaps all that had really occurred the previous day was only a feverish dream.

Meanwhile Percy sat up late into the night, thinking the matter out. He had given his word to Harold to speak to Eily, and he would do so.

Next morning, he thought of all that had ever passed between him and Eily. He felt sure that Harold was mistaken, but "Good heavens!" he murmured, "I thought she loved him, and it appears she doesn't. Can it be possible that he is right?"

Such an idea did not tend to make him feel at ease—indeed, he was miserable—but still there was the chance that Harold might be mistaken. He had given his word of honour, and he was determined to ask her to be his wife, no matter if it caused the unhappiness of a hundred others. He had said he should do it, and do it he would.

After a late breakfast, he sauntered down to St. George's Club. On his way there he saw Mr. O'Mahon and Gerry hurrying to catch the express train to town. About an hour later, from the club window, he saw Mrs. O'Mahon, Maud, Mr. Martin, and Phœbe going in the direction of the station, as if also bent on an excursion to the city. His first impulse was to follow them. How he longed to speak to Maud, to hear her voice, to look at her, to tell her of his love, and to tell her that, although he loved her, he had promised to wed her sister if she were willing to accept him.

But no ! He could not bear such an ordeal ! He would not see her again until his fate was decided ! His fate !

How he wondered what it should be !

They were all gone to town, that was evident ; so there would be no difficulty in seeing Eily alone.

How he longed to get the interview over ; how he dreaded it !

No man who asks a girl to wed him hopes for a refusal, but that was the earnest desire of Percy's heart. He dreaded an acceptance.

"Best get it over at once," he thought, and so he went.

Miss O'Mahon was at home, and he was admitted.

The servant opened the drawing-room door, and announced Mr. Langrishe.

Percy passed in, but only went a step or two when he stopped.

Eily was sitting on a low easy-chair, facing the window, looking out at the sea. How pale she was! Instantly Percy noticed a look of suffering that was new to her. Her eyes were wide open, but she was so still and motionless that one might fancy she was sleeping. On her lap Puck was comfortably curled up, and he was snoring. She evidently had not heard the servant's announcement of Percy's name. Her thoughts were far away.

There is a kind of subtle feeling that comes over us when any one is looking at us. Suddenly Eily felt she was not alone, and turned her head. Instantly anxiety and alarm were depicted on her face.

"Oh, Mr. Langrishe, don't!" she cried, and waved him back. "I know you have come to plead for your cousin. For

pity's sake don't ! I find it hard to bear—it is bitter. Oh, if he had not told me of his love perhaps"—and the poor girl burst into tears.

Percy must speak now. How he pitied Eily ! There was something very wrong somewhere.

"I saw Harold last night," he said, "and he told me that you did not love him."

"Not love him!" she cried. "Oh, God ! Not love him ! See !" with sudden energy. "I do not mind telling you now ; I intended telling you some time ; I love your cousin beyond everything ! Words seem poor to express my love for him !"

What a relief !

In all Percy's life he never experienced such a moment. It was a reprieve, and nothing less !

"Then why did you refuse him ? He was miserable—he was almost mad !"

"Oh, tell me, what did he say ?"

"I couldn't tell you half what he said ; he was nearly mad," was the reply. Then sternly, "But what are you going to do, girl ? What do you mean by flinging his heart aside ?"

Eily hung her head in silence.

"If you love him as you say you do, why"—

"If I love him!" she passionately interrupted. "God only knows how I love him!"

"Then why did you act so? Let me go to him!"

"I cannot help it," said Eily sadly. "Oh, Mr. Langrishe, pity me and pity him; but don't ask me to recall your cousin—it could never be—for I have—consented—to sell myself!"

"Sell yourself? Good heavens! What do you mean?"

"See!" she said, and she held up her hand and pointed to a diamond hoop that glittered in the sunlight, "I am engaged!"

"Engaged!" echoed Percy in bewildered surprise. "To whom?"

"Mr. Martin."

Percy looked at her in silence.

Could it be possible that this fair young girl was to wed that man who was old enough to be her father? the man who Mrs. Grundy thought was too attentive to her mother?

"Mr. Langrishe, I'll tell you everything, or almost everything—for there is one thing I cannot tell," and a flush suffused her pale face. "But I want you to make me a solemn promise. I want you to help me. Will you?"

She looked at him pleadingly, while big tears suffused her eyes.

"In what way can I help you?"

"I want you to tell your cousin at once of this engagement, but nothing more. You must not tell him that I love him."

"Why not?"

"He might come. I could not bear to see him. When it is all over, when I am married, then will you tell him of my love—of my sacrifice—and ask him to pray that my life may be short, very short? The sooner I die the better!"

Oh, the misery that sounded in her voice as she spoke.

"But why must you marry this man? Does your father wish it?"

"I'll tell you, and I trust to your honour not to repeat what I say."

"Surely your parents cannot force you!"

"Stay, do not think such a thing. My

dear, good father is pleased, but he thinks I marry willingly. He knows nothing about the ins and outs of it, and he must never, never know. I am marrying Mr. Martin of my own free-will. I am redeeming the Wild Park property for my brother!"

"I don't understand."

"Wild Park has been mortgaged for years, and we have been getting deeper into debt every day. Mr. Martin holds the mortgage, and he would foreclose if I refused to marry him. On my wedding day the deed will be destroyed, Wild Park will be free, and Gerry needn't go break stones in Australia, as he often declares will be his fate. You see your cousin could not free Wild Park, and even if there were no mortgage, there is another reason why I must marry Mr. Martin."

"What?" asked Percy eagerly.

"I cannot tell it. Alas! there is no escape for me."

"Not even if the mortgage were paid? How much is it?"

For a moment a wild idea of paying off the mortgage entered Percy's head. He could easily raise the money if he had not enough, but he was in possession of a considerable

fortune, and he would willingly sacrifice all to secure the happiness of this girl and his cousin.

"No, not even then," she said. "The other reason is of more importance. Please do not think about it. My marriage with Mr. Martin must be. Later, perhaps, I'll give you a note for your cousin. In the meantime—tell him—to forget me!"

Percy saw there was no use in trying to make the girl rescind her decision, there was evidently a very strong and urgent reason why this marriage should take place. He pitied her immensely, but as he walked home-wards he thought with satisfaction that he was free to woo Maud, and how glad he felt that it was so, although the unhappiness of poor Eily made a deep impression on him.

It was dreadful that she should marry this man to save her family from poverty, evidently it was her mother who urged her to accept him.

Percy's first impulse was to go at once to his cousin, but Harold told him not to go. Besides, if he went, questions might be asked, questions that he would find difficult to answer, so he would not go yet. Later, he

should see him, to give him Eily's message. So he wrote :

" DEAR HAROLD,

" You were quite wrong. Eily does not love me. She desired me to tell you that she is engaged, and will shortly be married to Mr. Martin.

" She hopes you will try to forget her.

" Yours truly,

" PERCY LANGRISHE."

He wrote several notes before he could please himself in the wording. He was afraid to say too much, for he might give Harold a clue, and it would only cause more misery to his cousin if he knew the girl loved him. So finally the above short note was written and despatched to Harold, who was too ill to read it when it arrived, and there it lay unopened for several days.

At last he read it.

" She sells herself for gold," he said with scorn. " And I have loved a woman capable of such! Have loved her! God help me! I love her still."

CHAPTER V.

O wise young judge, how I do honour thee !

We must retrace a little, we must go back to the day after the picnic.

Erin was in tears, for it was wet and stormy. Perhaps she knew *davance*, and was weeping about the fate of one of her daughters.

Does not nature often weep, and often rejoice with us ?

She does, and why ?

Quien sabe ? Some wise philosopher must tell us why !

Eily and Maud were together in the bedroom of the latter. Eily gave up her right as the elder to the best room ; she took a little one in front, facing the houses opposite, in order that Maud might have the larger one at the back with view of the sea. She dearly loved sea !

Eily was seated on a low chair, Puck was on her lap making pretence of being very angry with her, he was growling, and

trying to bite her fingers as she played with his soft black ears, but he didn't bite her. Oh, dear ho! it was only play. He loved his young mistress, and he knew that she loved him, but he was egotistic, extremely so; for he thought she liked him for his own sake. She may have loved him a little bit for himself, for he, like all pugs, had coaxing ways, but Eily loved him dearly, very dearly, for the sake of the donor.

It was for Harold's sake that she loved Puck so much, it was a case of "Love me, love my dog."

Maud was in the window, she was painting. This was the first opportunity she had of taking a sketch on a stormy day. She had been wishing for such a chance, for ever since she had come to Kingstown the weather had been unusually fine, and the sea had been calm and *riante*.

Now it was a dark, leaden colour, and big waves rolled and tumbled over each other, as they dashed on the breakwater. There was a coal vessel scudding along before the wind, with all sails set, and further out there was a steamer, rolling and pitching, on her way to Liverpool.

Howth was barely discernible, the mist

nearly covered it, and the slanting rain which fell in frequent showers impeded the view.

It was decidedly bad weather, nay, it was even more, for sailors would call it "dirty weather."

Eily played with Puck, while Maud dashed in the colours with a vigorous touch. All this young girl did, she did well, for she worked always *con amore*, and she made it a rule never to be idle. Often and often she rebuked her brother and sister for their idleness and laziness, "You could learn so much, if you would never waste your time," she would say, but neither followed her example. Neither had her thirst for knowledge, or her desire for improvement.

With Gerry life was enough, he wanted only to live. Eily was satisfied to read a little in foreign languages, but she rather enjoyed doing nothing. *Dolce far niente* suited her!

The sisters were thus employed, Eily fondling her dog, Maud painting, when Mrs. O'Mahon entered the room. She did not look well, black circles were under her eyes, and she was very pale. She came forward with a hesitating step.

"I was looking for you, Eily," she said,

in an almost inaudible voice. "I want to talk to you, dear."

The girl looked at her mother, and instantly saw by her face that there was some trouble, some annoyance weighing on her mind.

"What is it, mother?" she asked. "You don't look well! Are you ill, dear?"

"No! I am not ill! but I had a sleepless night. I am worried and depressed."

She walked towards the window, and looked at Maud's picture.

"Will you leave that aside, dear?" she said, "I want you to help me—I want you to induce Eily to listen to reason. You are so sensible, you can persuade her."

"What is it, mother?" asked Maud, as she put down her palette, and turned her easel aside.

"Well, dears! I hardly know how to say it, but the fact is, I"—she stopped, the words would not come. Woman of the world, as she was, she felt ashamed before her young daughters. She knew she should make a very open confession to them, and she dreaded doing so.

Eily and Maud glanced at each other, they

both wondered, but neither could guess what was coming.

Mrs. O'Mahon looked down, she could not bear to meet the gaze of the two pairs of bright eyes fixed on her, she twisted her fingers in and out, and at last got command of her voice.

"Mr. Martin has done you the honour to propose for you, Eily; and I hope you will consent to marry him!"

If a bomb had suddenly exploded in the room, there couldn't have been greater consternation. Then, perhaps there might have been death, now a heart was wounded, nothing more.

"Mother!" from two young voices, the word was spoken by Maud indignantly, by Eily pleadingly.

"My child! for God's sake! don't refuse him, or you will ruin us, you'll make us beggars! Here, on my knees," and she flung herself before her daughter, "I beseech you to accept him. You don't know—you can't understand how much it means!"

"It means a great deal to me," said Eily, in a pained voice, "it means I must give up all hope of happiness."

"Don't say that dear! The other could never be. You remember what my aunt said about soldiers, and he couldn't marry without a fortune, and you know you haven't got a penny. I beseech you, Eily, to accept Mr. Martin, he will make you happy; and think of the position you will secure for yourself."

"Get up mother, please! I don't like to see you kneeling," said Eily, in a pained voice.

Maud helped her mother to rise, and placed a chair for her.

"Maud help me!" cried Mrs. OMahon, passionately. "Plead with me—ask your sister to save us from ruin!"

"I cannot!" in a stern voice from Maud.

"Does he say he will turn us out of Wild Park, if I refuse to marry him?"

"Not exactly!" stammered Mrs. OMahon, "but he could do so, he has the right of foreclosure at any minute. I think, perhaps, he might let things be for your father's life, but Gerry would be a beggar!"

"What does papa say?" asked Eily.

"I only told him that Mr. Martin had proposed for you, and he said you are a lucky girl!"

"Lucky girl! oh! mother!" What sorrow, what reproach were in those words.

"Eily! save us from beggary—save Wild Park for Gerry—don't send him to Australia to break stones!" pleaded the mother.

"Maud! dear sister! speak to me, advise me—tell me what I ought to do."

"I cannot advise you, Eily, but I'll tell you what I should do!"

"What?"

"I would marry the devil himself to save Wild Park for Gerry!"

"Notwithstanding, that you"—Eily paused.

Maud understood what she meant though, and replied at once.

"Notwithstanding everything! I should not hesitate a minute. I would marry the old boy if he asked me, on condition Wild Park was freed for Gerry!" Stern resolution sounded in Maud's voice, her very tones seemed to tell that she meant what she said.

"Oh! why didn't he ask you?" cried poor Eily.

"Why, indeed! Because he knows I dislike him very nearly as much as Satan! He knows too he should not find a gentle,

submissive wife in me—Stephen Martin is wise—very wise!"

"You do not dislike him, Eily?" said Mrs. O'Mahon, "you have always been kind and attentive to him—and you have given him encouragement."

"Encouragement! how can you say such a thing, mother!" cried Eily, indignantly, "I never dreamt that Mr. Martin ever thought of me in that way."

"He told me last night, he thought of you from the very first," said Mrs. O'Mahon.

"Maud! if we were beggars what would you do?" asked Eily, looking anxiously at her sister.

"Try and earn my bread, and help to support my parents," was the instantaneous reply.

"Mother, I cannot marry him! I cannot sell myself—even to redeem Wild Park for Gerry."

"It is not selling yourself! you could be so happy!"

"I cannot marry him!"

"Think about it. Reflect."

"It would be useless, mother. I cannot marry him!"

"Oh, child, child! If you will not do it for your brother's sake, will you do it for mine?"

"Why for yours?" asked Eily, in astonishment.

"Oh! must I tell you? Oh! what agony! What shame!"

And the mother rocked herself to and fro.

"Shame! What do you mean by using that word, mother?" asked Maud. "It is an ugly word!"

And she fixed her eyes steadfastly on Mrs. O'Mahon.

"Don't look at me, Maud! I cannot speak if you gaze at me like that!"

Maud turned away in apprehension. It must be something very dreadful that her mother found it so difficult to speak about.

"I owe him—a lot—of money—that I can never pay."

The words fell slowly and distinctly.

In an instant the hot blood mounted to Eily's face and dyed it crimson, and every vestige of colour fled from Maud's, and left her pale, while anger and scorn were visibly depicted on her face.

"How dare you borrow money from him!" she said in a harsh voice.

Answer there was none.

Mrs. O'Mahon was weeping. It was such a bitter humiliation to her to have to confess her fault to her children.

"Does papa know?" questioned Eily.

"No, no!" sobbed the mother; "he must never know. Oh! save me, Eily!"

"How much do you owe him?" asked Maud. "Perhaps Aunt Ferrers would help, for of course he must be paid."

"If Eily consents, there will be no need for payment."

"You haven't answered the question. How much do you owe?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know! Pray explain!"

"Eily, my child, save your mother!" in a plaintive voice from Mrs. O'Mahon.

"Mother, I think you ought to tell us everything; you are keeping something back. Maud has asked you twice how much you owe Mr. Martin. Now I ask the question; how much is it?"

"For the diamonds!" murmured Mrs. O'Mahon, in a low tone.

"The diamonds! What diamonds?"

queried Eily. "Did not Aunt Ferrers give them to you?"

"No; he gave them!"

"What! Mr. Martin gave you the diamonds!" cried Maud angrily. "And you dared to take them! You! our mother—my father's honoured wife—you dared to forget what was due to us! You dared to accept such a gift from a stranger!"

"Oh, Maud, Maud! Be merciful!"

"How can I be merciful when I know you have done such a shameful thing? What would the world think of you if it were known you accept diamonds from men?"

"I didn't mean to accept them at first; I only took a loan of them, and then—they were such a temptation, and I hadn't any."

"Can't a woman exist without diamonds?" cried Maud, with indignation. "You lived without them long enough, and only waited until you could disgrace your daughters. You told us your aunt gave them to you, and we all wondered at the munificence of her gift."

"I couldn't think of anything else to say."

"Mother, I blush for you!" said Maud as she walked to the window.

Eily was horrified. She had always thought so highly of her mother that she would not have believed her capable of the very least impropriety, and here Mrs. O'Mahon had not only confessed that she had taken this gift—this valuable gift—but had also lied to her husband and children about it, and Eily remembered with shameful agony how she had spoken to Mr. Martin about the said diamonds. She asked him how much he thought they were worth, and she recalled how he appraised each ornament separately, and he had counted all as worth over £1,000.

“Couldn't you give them back?” at last said Eily, in a subdued voice.

“I could; but you see it would be awkward after so long.”

“They must not be given back!” said Maud, in a firm voice; she still remained looking out of the window. “He must be paid for them.”

“But where is the money to come from?” asked her mother.

“Sell the diamonds, and every scrap of jewellery we all possess. Papa will help us to make up the difference, or perhaps we might ask Aunt Ferrers.”

"My God, Maud! You want to ruin me," cried Mrs. O'Mahon in an agonized voice. "Your father must never know! I would throw myself into the sea if he knew. Eily, save your mother!"

It was dreadful for this girl to have to choose.

She loved Harold, and she thought he loved her. She had been building castles in the air. They would be poor, but together they would be happy; then her mother, bowed down with grief and apprehension, she had been foolish, nothing more; but if the world knew of this gift of these diamonds she would be looked on as a guilty woman. Only a day or two before Gerry spoke to his sisters about Mr. Martin's conduct towards their mother, and he told them people were making remarks. How they would talk if they knew about these jewels!

Maud stood still, looking out of the window. She felt the shame of it keenly, she thought it dreadful, and she saw with grief that there was only one course open.

"Maud, come here," said her sister. "You are so much wiser; you see things so much better than I do; tell me, what do you think?"

Maud turned round ; she was pale ; she was composed.

“ Our mother’s reputation must be saved,” she said quietly.

How these words cut through Mrs. O’Mahon ! They stabbed her, but she knew her young daughter was right.

Maud went on—

“ It seems there is only one way to do it. She does not want our father to know how weak she has been, and it is as well to spare him the shame of knowing. If the diamonds were sold to pay this man, papa would naturally want to know what became of *Aunt Ferrers’ gift*, so they must not be sold, nor must they be given back to Mr. Martin ; they have been seen with mother ; they would be recognised. It will not do to make an enemy of Stephen Martin, so Eily—you will have to save our mother’s good name ! ”

“ You mean I must marry him ? ”

Maud bowed her head in assent.

“ Oh, it is hard ! How can I do it ? Alas ! alas ! ” cried poor Eily in agony.

She knew her sister was right ; that to save her mother’s reputation she would have to marry this man. If she refused him, he

would be their enemy—he could beggar them; but that was of little moment compared with the loss of her mother's good name. Mr. Martin, of course, would be silent where his wife's parent was concerned, but the mother of the girl who refused him would meet with small mercy. It was hard for this young girl to relinquish her dreams, but she saw she must do so; she must sacrifice herself.

“Tell Mr. Martin I will marry him.”

Mrs. O'Mahon sprang to her feet.

“God bless you, my darling!” she said, as she kissed Eily, who quietly submitted to the caress. “You have taken a load off my heart.”

“And I have put one on mine!”

“Don't say that, dear! You can be so happy. Think of the wealth and the position.”

“Of course Wild Park will be free!” said Eily.

The mother's face crimsoned over. She had drawn very much on her imagination when she said that Mr. Martin would avail himself of his right of foreclosure. He had never mentioned such a thing. Indeed

he knew very well that he had Mrs. O'Mahon in his power without using such a threat. He could see a long way before him, and when he induced her to accept the diamonds he was entangling her in his toils.

He understood the truth of the adage—

He who would the daughter win
Must with the mother first begin.

“It is not at all likely that Mr. Martin would act harshly towards his wife's people,” said Mrs. O'Mahon, nervously. “Of course he will be lenient, and”—

“Stay, mother!” exclaimed Maud. “You led us to believe that the mortgage would be foreclosed unless Eily consented to marry Mr. Martin. Now I will not allow her to sacrifice herself merely to save your name. Wild Park must be freed!”

“You don't imagine that he would resign the deed, surely?” demanded Mrs. O'Mahon.

“Then if he doesn't choose to do so I advise Eily to refuse him and let us face the consequences. We can emigrate.”

Eily stood up and approached her sister. She was very pale, and walked with a faltering step.

"I am going to my room, dear," she said. "You and mother can settle my fate between you. I shall do whatever you say, and *you* can come and tell me."

With a kiss to her sister she left the room without even glancing towards her mother, who felt with pain that her fault was beginning to bear bitter fruit.

"Now, mother!" said Maud, "you and I must settle this at once. Write to Stephen Martin, tell him Eily will marry him on condition that on their wedding day the mortgage deed is destroyed! Now, at once he must hand it over to our keeping. We mustn't give him the chance of having a sham deed prepared. If he doesn't choose to do so then we must suffer, and to tell the truth I almost hope he won't agree."

"Oh, Maud! he never will consent! How could you expect him?" cried Mrs. O'Mahon piteously. "We can ask him to reduce the interest. Have pity on me! Think of me!"

"You thought so much of your husband and children!"

"Maud! Maud! you are driving me mad!"

But at last Maud gained the day. Her mother wrote the letter as suggested, but

she trembled for the result. She felt certain Mr. Martin would not agree, she never expected he would. Then her busy brain began to work. Was there any way to hoodwink Maud? She was afraid not, for if Mr. Martin did not at once hand over the deed Maud declared she would call on her father to prevent the marriage, and Mrs. O'Mahon knew very well if he had the least idea that his daughter was forced into it that he would stop it even at the very last minute.

A happy thought struck her. She would write another private letter to Mr. Martin. She did so, and told him that the other one had been written at Maud's dictation. She begged him to accede to the terms in it. "You can trust me," she wrote, "let me keep the deed. I can give it to your wife in your presence, and of course she will hand it to you when you ask for it. Eily is obedient, you need not fear that she will disobey you."

When Mr. Martin received the two letters he was indignant, and at first felt inclined to give up all idea of the marriage. He would not have the girl, he would make them beggars, he would make them feel what it

was to have him for an enemy. But then he thought of Eily. How good, how gentle she was. And he thought if they were married she would get to like him in time. He would take her away to foreign countries. He would keep her away from Maud's influence.

He decided he would agree. He would give the deed into Mrs. O'Mahon's keeping, of course on the understanding that he should get it back again. Accordingly he wrote her a note, and said he would go in to town and fetch the deed.

Mrs. O'Mahon understood that he agreed to her proposition.

Then followed a lengthy discussion between them. Maud wanted to get possession of the deed, she intuitively felt that her mother was not to be trusted, and of course Mrs. O'Mahon could not possibly let it out of her keeping. At last they came to terms, the deed was to be placed in a drawer of which Mrs. O'Mahon had the key; but Maud was to have the right of seeing it was safe at any time of the day or night she chose.

In the afternoon Mr. Martin arrived, and was received by Mrs. O'Mahon, who was cowed and subdued. He saw she was afraid of him, and he meant to keep her in his power.

He gave her the deed, and told her that in consequence of risking so much he would not make any settlement on Eily; but that afterwards when he got back the deed he would make a post-nuptial settlement.

Mrs. O'Mahon said it was quite fair; but she was uncertain how her husband would take it, but she would do her best to persuade him to agree.

That evening Mr. Martin saw his *fiancée*. She was pale, composed, and cold. She told him she would do her best to please him.

How angry he felt at her coolness! But he coveted her. He would not give her up.

He had won, and he was triumphant!

Maud's suspicions were aroused by her mother's manner. She insisted on seeing the deed, and examined it carefully.

Yes! there was no doubt it was all right, there was her father's signature. But she was alert. She would not trust her mother, she would watch her.

Eily's sacrifice should not take place for nothing!

END OF VOL. I.







